Spirit Circle

05

story & art by
SATOSHI MIZUKAMI

CIRCLE 27
LAFALLE 6

WHAT A COINCI-DENCE.
HEY, LAFALLE.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE I LEFT THE FACILITY.
I HEARD YOU'RE THE MANAGER OF THE "TOMB" NOW.
ASH...
ASH, IS THAT YOU?
STEP
"WE"?
...
THE NON-LIVING MANAGEMENT CENTER. THAT'S WHAT WE CALL IT.
"TOMB"?

...
YOU'VE...
...GOTTEN TALLER.
HA HA.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
A COUPLE OF BRATS, HUH?
WE'RE JUST A PAIR OF BRATS A COUPLE YEARS APART FROM THE SAME FACILITY.
QUIT PLAYING THE OLDER BROTHER.
...
YOU SHOULD QUIT.
BEING A TERRORIST, I MEAN.
...
HEH...
...
HA HA...

YOU KNOW?
I GUESS... I CAN JUST TELL.
HOW--?
SIGH.
FOR YOUR OWN SAKE.
WASH YOUR HANDS OF THEM, ASH.
IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO START OVER.
...AH!
CLAP
DON'T TELL ME WHAT TO--!
I TOLD YOU TO QUIT PLAYING THE OLDER BROTHER!
SHOVE

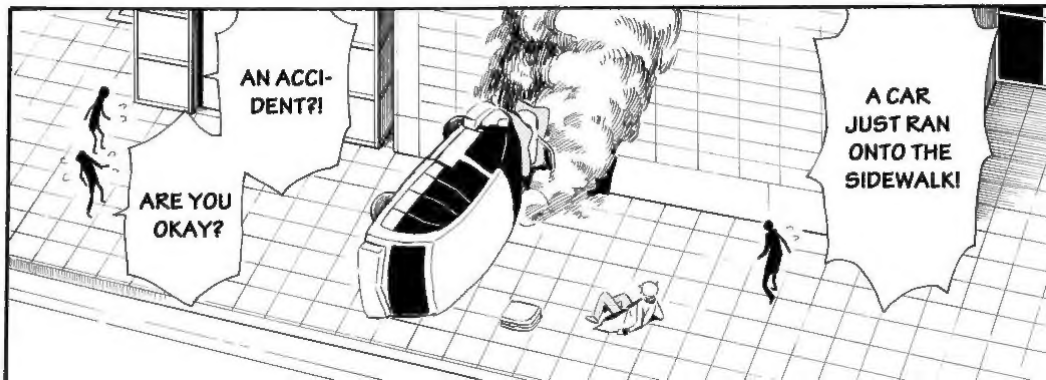
...
I'VE ALWAYS HAD A SHORT FUSE.
CALM DOWN...
MUTTER MUTTER
...
...
IT WASN'T A COINCIDENCE THAT WE MET HERE.
MY JOB IS TO STOP THE MANAGER OF THE "TOMB."
MUMBLE
...LISTEN TO ME.
MUMBLE MUMBLE
...
WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS?
ALL IN ORDER TO KILL YOU.
MAKE YOUR GUARD ROBOT STAND BETWEEN YOU AND THE STREET.
IN A FEW MINUTES...
MUMBLE
...AN A.I.-DRIVEN VEHICLE WILL MAL-FUNCTION AND COME DRIVING THROUGH HERE.

I FEEL THAT THE ORGAN-IZATION IS HYPO-CRITICAL.
I JOINED ARION BECAUSE I SYMPATHIZED WITH THEIR ANTI-TECHNOLOGY PRINCIPLES.
BUT ARION ITSELF IS CONDUCTING SECRET RESEARCH.
RESEARCH...? WHAT KIND OF...
BLACK HOLE BOMBS.
IT'S THE SORT OF TABOO ARION SHOULD WORK ON OVERTHROWING.
BUT ONE MISSED STEP, AND THEIR RIDICULOUS RESEARCH COULD OBLITERATE THE ENTIRE WORLD.
I BELIEVE HUMANITY SHOULD NEVER ENTER THAT KIND OF TERRITORY.
CIVILIZATION CAN RETURN TO SQUARE ONE.

I'LL RESIST THE ORGAN-IZATION.
I'LL CHANGE IT FROM THE INSIDE.
ANYWAY, I'M STARTING BY TRYING TO HELP YOU ESCAPE.
...TO PASSION AND DESPER-ATION.
SO WE DON'T LOSE EVERY-THING...
BUT...
DON'T DIE IN FRONT OF ME.
I HATE YOU, LAFALLE.
SKID
ジャ
ジャジャリ
SCREECH
HONK

WHUD
SKWEE
MANAGER LAFALLE, WATCH OUT!!

WHAM
WUMPH

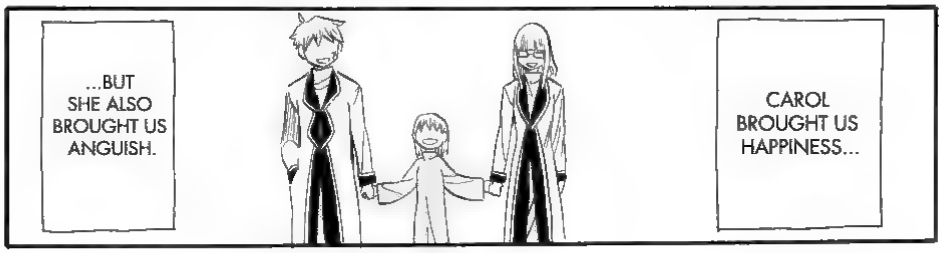

AN ACCI-DENT?!
ARE YOU OKAY?
A CAR JUST RAN ONTO THE SIDEWALK!

WHERE ARE YOU FROM, ROBOT?
HELP HIM!
THE ROBOT'S TRAPPED!
IT'S AN UN-MANNED VEHICLE!
WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE INSIDE?!
...
YOU SURE ARE TOUGH.
THANK YOU. I'M A GUARD ROBOT FROM THE SLEEPING TOWER.
LAFALLE.
HM.

...
MAYBE HE LOST IT IN THE ACCIDENT.
WHY?
...YOU ERASED THE GUARD ROBOT'S LOGS FROM JUST BEFORE AND AFTER THE ACCIDENT.
WHO WAS IT?
WHAT WERE YOU DISCUSSING?
...A CAMERA IN THE CITY RECORDED YOU SPEAKING WITH SOMEONE.
JUST BEFORE THE INCIDENT...
...
...
HE JUST ASKED ME WHERE HE COULD GET GOOD FRIED FOOD IN THE CITY.
A STRANGER.
I COULDN'T TELL HER ABOUT ASH.
I'M GLAD I BROUGHT THE GUARD ROBOT WITH ME.
YOU WERE RIGHT.
YEAH.
SIGH
はぁ
. REALLY
IN ANY CASE, I'M GLAD YOU'RE ALL RIGHT.

THEIR GOALS OF REIGNING IN EXCESSIVE TECHNOLOGIES ALIGNED.
1 THE GOVERNMENT SECRETLY SUPPORTS THE TERRORIST ORGANIZATION ARION
...BUT ACCORDING TO LAPIS .
I DON'T KNOW HOW SHE FOUND OUT ..
I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW MANY PEOPLE IN ARION KNOW
NO. IF THEY KNEW, THEY WOULDN'T SUPPORT THEM.
DOES THE GOVERNMENT KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON?
HOWEVER, ARION IS ALSO RESEARCHING BLACK HOLE BOMBS.
A MANAGER ALMOST 20 GENERATIONS AGO WAS INVOLVED IN THE FOUNDING OF ARION
THAT'S WHY THEY TARGET THEM WHEN THEY GO TO THE CITY.
2 ARION KNOWS THAT GENERATIONS OF SLEEPING TOWER MANAGERS HAVE BEEN CONDUCTING FORBIDDEN RESEARCH.
THE GOVERNMENT ALSO KNOWS ABOUT THE SLEEPING TOWER'S FORBIDDEN RESEARCH
3

ONE SIDE WISHES TO PRESERVE THE FORBIDDEN RESEARCH WHILE THE OTHER WANTS TO ERASE IT.
OPINIONS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT ARE DIVIDED.
THE PRESER-VATIONISTS ARE LARGELY UNCHALLENGED.
.. AND THE GOVERNMENT IS DIVIDED AS WELL.
ARION IS DIVIDED ..
.. WE LIVE OUR LIVES.
. SIMUL-TANEOUSLY UNDER ATTACK AND OVER-LOOKED...
BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES .
THE GOVERNMENT MAY KNOW ABOUT CAROL AS WELL.



...I WANT A FUTURE FOR HUMANITY.

FOR THIS GIRL'S SAKE...

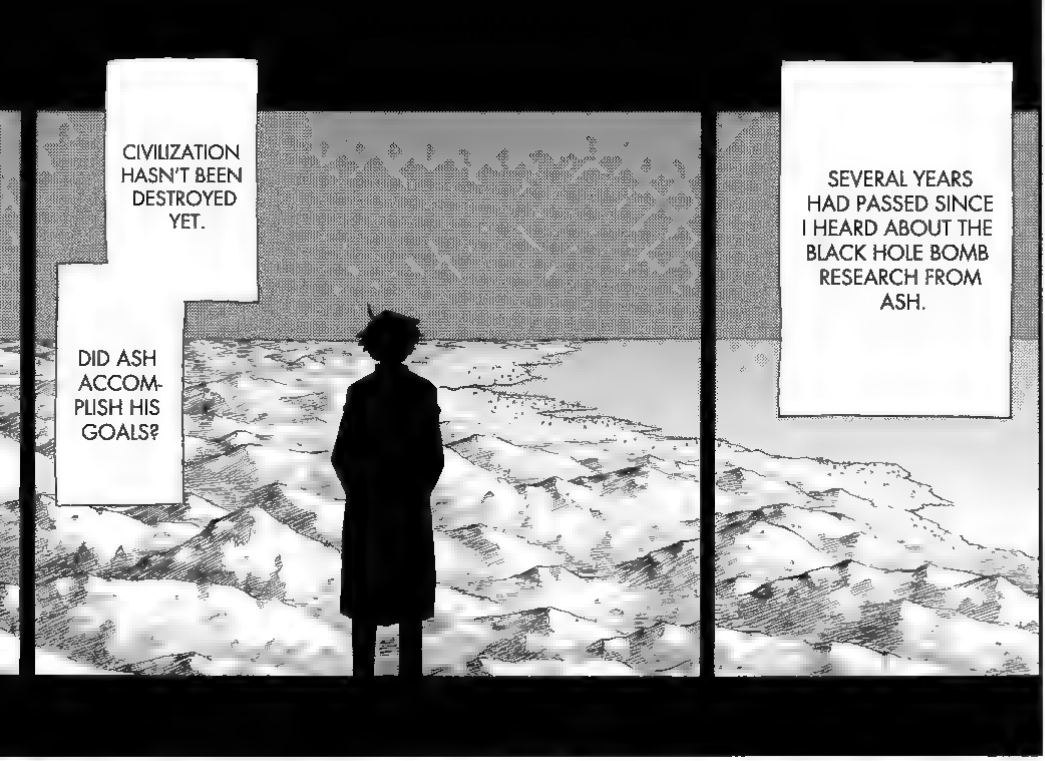
I REFUSE TO SPEND MY LIFE WATCHING HUMANKIND DIE!!
YOU'VE BEEN ACTING STRANGE LATELY
HOW SO?
TELL ME WHAT'S BOTHERING YOU.
WE ARE A MARRIED COUPLE.
A MARRIED COUPLE, HUH? WE'VE NEVER EVEN HELD HANDS.

YOU'RE RIGHT.
WE HELD HANDS DURING OUR PROPOSAL.
...YOU STOPPED GETTING RILED UP ABOUT ARION.
...AND YOU YOURSELF WERE ATTACKED...
EVEN THOUGH IT'S A STRONG POSSIBILITY TALIO WAS KILLED BY ARION INSTEAD OF DYING IN AN ACCIDENT...
COME TO THINK OF IT, SHE'S RIGHT.
IT WAS THEN...
SO WE DON'T LOSE EVERYTHING TO PASSION AND DESPERATION...
I'VE ALWAYS HAD A SHORT FUSE...

...I FEEL LIKE THE FLAME OF MY HATRED BURNED OUT.
WHEN I HEARD ASH SAY THOSE WORDS...
ISN'T IT THE SAME FOR YOU. .
..LAPIS?
NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN CAROL.
I LIVE FOR HER.
. .THAT TOOK AWAY EVERYTHING IMPORTANT TO YOU?
ISN'T ARION THE ORGAN-IZATION...
I WILL PROTECT HER.
...
YES
I CAN'T TELL LAPIS.
IF YOU GET STUCK, AT LEAST COME TALK TO ME.
I WILL... THANKS.
AS LONG AS YOU FEEL THE SAME WAY, I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU WORRY ABOUT.

...BUT A QUIET ONE.
I WANT HER TO GROW UP NORMALLY.
NOT A LIFE OF USING THE CURSED POWER OF A DESIGNER BABY...
LAPIS, I BELIEVE...
...THE POWER GRANTED TO CAROL IS A BLESSING.
THINGS AREN'T LIKE THEY WERE HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO. I BELIEVE HUMANKIND IS READY TO USE FORBIDDEN TECHNOLOGIES.
WE SHOULD HAVE MATURED BY NOW.

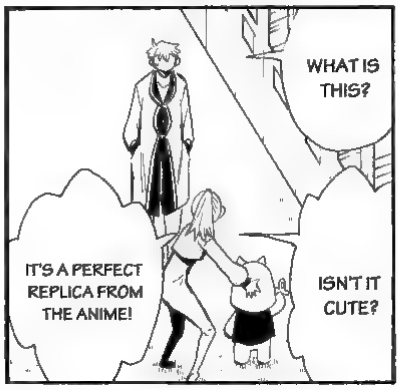
DO YOU BELIEVE THE NON-LIVING ARE ALIVE?
I HAVE A QUES-TION
MANAGER LAFALLE.
HEY. DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?
HELLO.
THEN HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A GHOST?
ISN'T THAT WHY THE SLEEPING TOWER EXISTS? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
? THEY'RE ALIVE, OF COURSE.
I SEE.
HA HA. GHOSTS DON'T EXIST.
NOT ME.
I HAD TROUBLE FINDING A SUC-CESSOR.
SORRY TO BOTHER YOU.


CIVILIZATION HASN'T BEEN DESTROYED YET.
DID ASH ACCOMPLISH HIS GOALS?
SEVERAL YEARS HAD PASSED SINCE I HEARD ABOUT THE BLACK HOLE BOMB RESEARCH FROM ASH.

DON'T YOU ACTUALLY WANT TO EXTINGUISH THAT FIRE MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE?
ASH...
...ARE YOU STILL USING FIRE?
FIRE.
NEWS OF ARION ACTIVITY.
IT'S ON THE NEWS SOMETIMES.
NEWS

DADDY!
...PASSED
TIME..

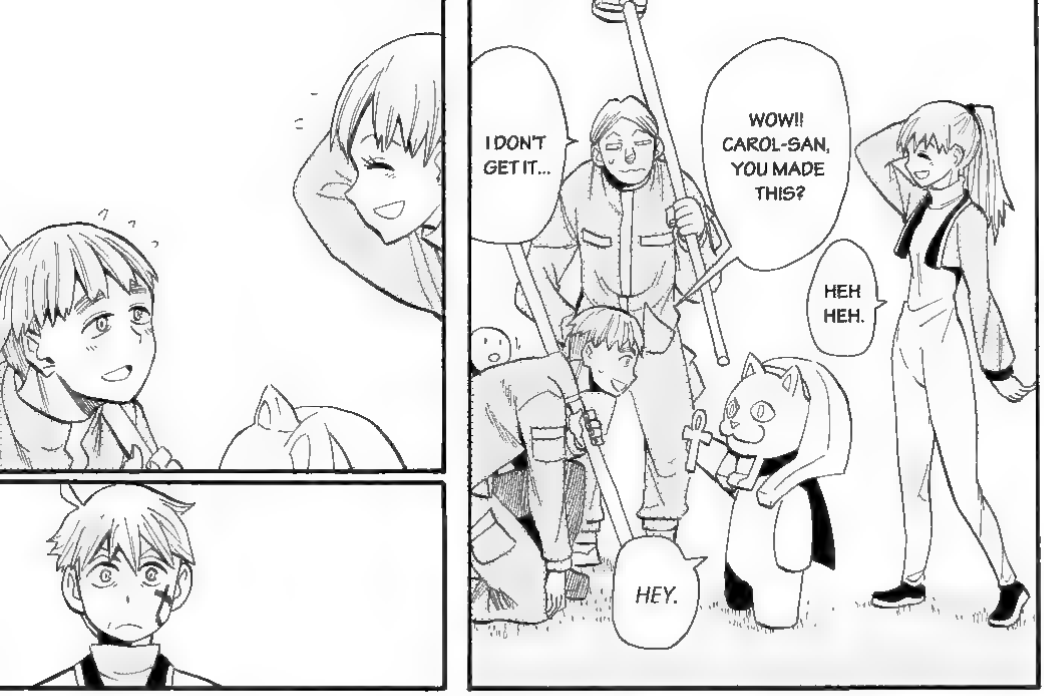
...


WHAT IS THIS?
IT'S A PERFECT REPLICA FROM THE ANIME!
ISN'T IT CUTE?

LOOK AT THIS.
IT'S ROBO-CAT.
HEY. HELLO.

NOT THE A.I., ITS FACE!! IT'S PERFECT! IT'S ART!
REALLY... UH, REALLY...?
I KNOW. YOU KNOW THAT, TOO.
DID YOU SEE CAROL'S ROBO-CAT?!
THIS GIRL IS A GENIUS!!

WOW!! THAT'S A PERFECT REPLICA!
HELLO... HEY, THAT'S ROBO-CAT!!
OH. HELLO, MANAGER LAFALLE, MISS CAROL.
THIS IS PERFECT?


I DON'T GET IT...
WOW!! CAROL-SAN, YOU MADE THIS?
HEH HEH.
HEY.

...ELIA-KUN, OTARI-KUN.

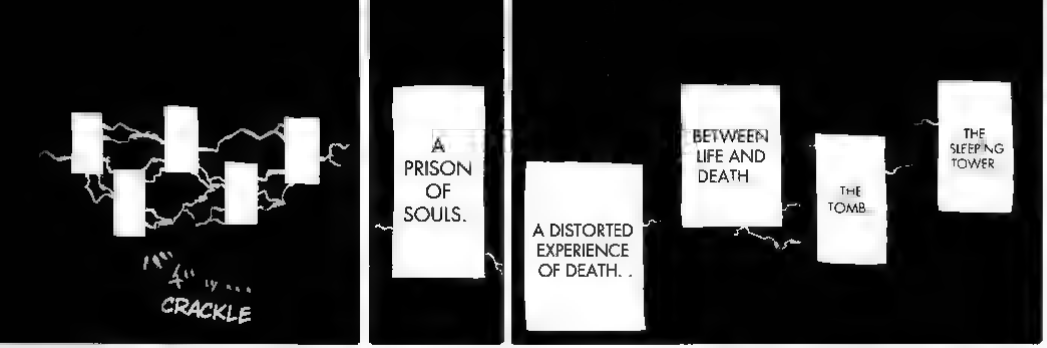
...
HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A GHOST?

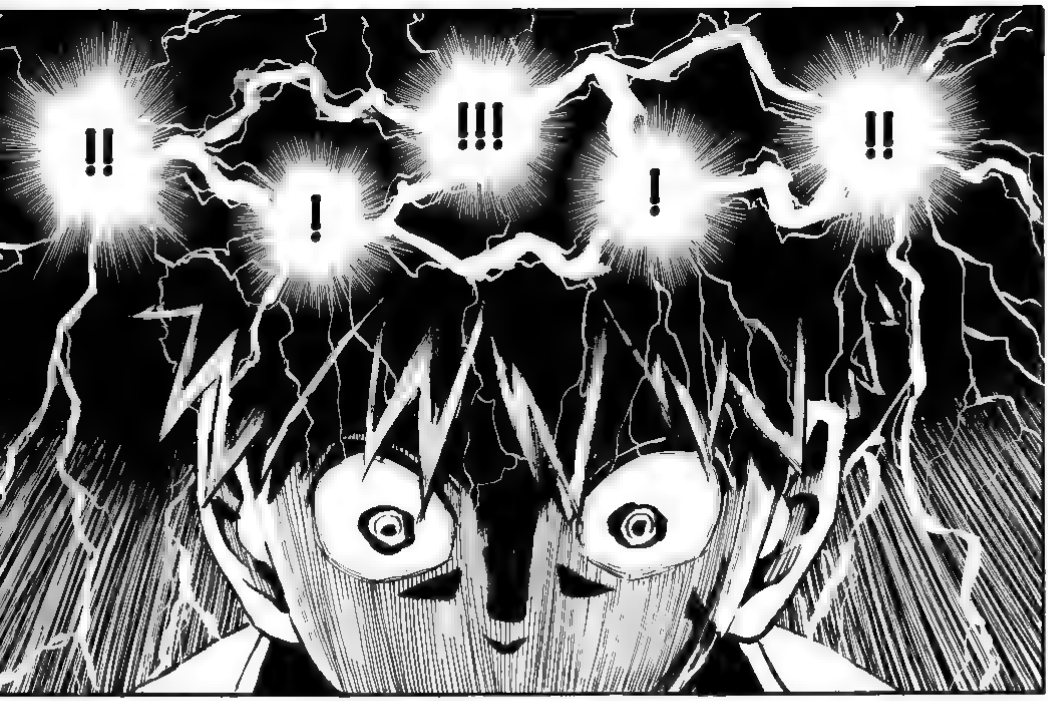
...
...

I DON'T KNOW...

BUT THEY MIGHT AS WELL BE DEAD.
WELL, I GUESS THEY'RE ALIVE.
DO YOU BELIEVE THE NON-LIVING ARE ALIVE?
WHAT ABOUT YOU, ELIA-KUN?

...AND THEY HAVEN'T SEEN A GHOST.
THEY ANSWERED SLOWLY..
SORRY FOR BOTHERING YOU
I SEE.
?
NEITHER HAVE I...
I HAVEN'T SEEN ONE.
A GHOST?
?
?
"THE NON-LIVING ARE PITIFUL NON-DEAD WHOSE SOULS HAVE BEEN IMPRISONED."
"THEY ARE NEITHER ALIVE NOR DEAD."
EVERY TIME I ASK AN EMPLOYEE IF THEY BELIEVE THE NON-LIVING ARE ALIVE,
SOMEONE INSIDE ME ANSWERS THUS.
FORBIDDEN TECHNOLOGIES . THE UNSTOPPABLE POPULATION DECLINE.
PERHAPS THIS PLACE SHOULD BE FORBIDDEN AS WELL.
DO NOT PERVERT HUMANKIND'S EXPERIENCE OF DEATH.
THE "TOMB," THAT'S WHAT WE CALL IT.
THEY'RE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH. THEY'RE HALF...


CRACKLE
A PRISON OF SOULS.
A DISTORTED EXPERIENCE OF DEATH. .
BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH
THE TOMB
THE SLEEPING TOWER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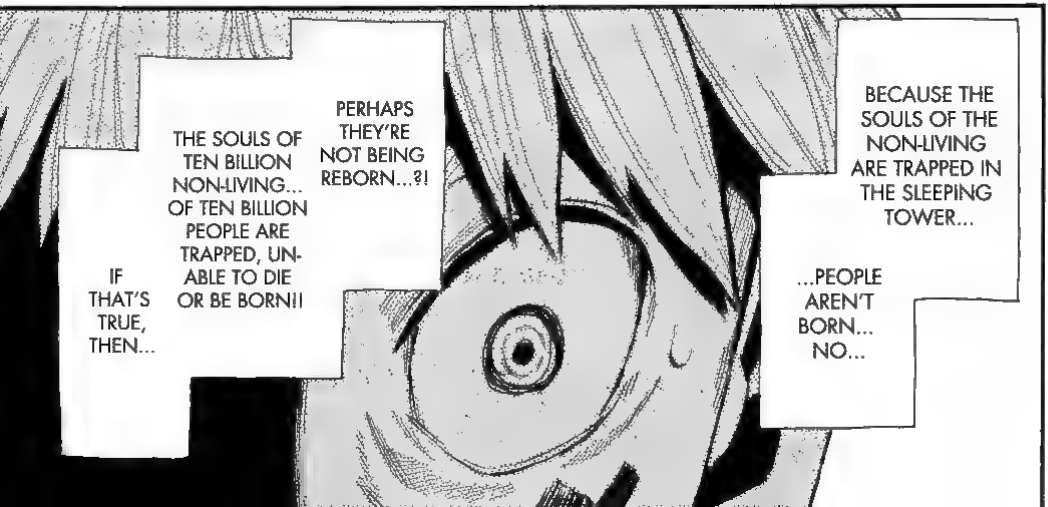
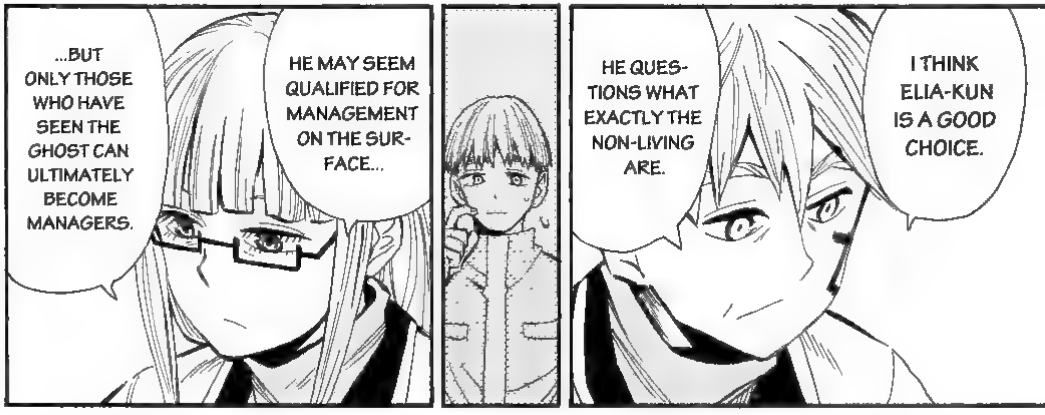

IF THAT'S TRUE, THEN...
THE SOULS OF TEN BILLION NON-LIVING... OF TEN BILLION PEOPLE ARE TRAPPED, UNABLE TO DIE OR BE BORN!!
PERHAPS THEY'RE NOT BEING REBORN...?!
BECAUSE THE SOULS OF THE NON-LIVING ARE TRAPPED IN THE SLEEPING TOWER...
...PEOPLE AREN'T BORN... NO...

THIS PLACE IS THE EPICENTER OF HUMANITY'S DESTRUCTION.
I DON'T BELIEVE IT.

CIRCLE 28
LAFALLE 7

I CAN'T BELIEVE NONE OF THE EMPLOYEES HAVE SEEN THE GHOST.
THE SUC-CESSOR PROBLEM IS A REAL HEAD-ACHE...


...BUT ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE SEEN THE GHOST CAN ULTIMATELY BECOME MANAGERS.
HE MAY SEEM QUALIFIED FOR MANAGEMENT ON THE SUR-FACE...
HE QUES-TIONS WHAT EXACTLY THE NON-LIVING ARE.
I THINK ELIA-KUN IS A GOOD CHOICE.

THAT'S IMPOS-SIBLE.
ARE YOU SAYING WE'LL BE THE LAST ONES?
..NOBODY WILL SEE THE GHOST ANYMORE.
MAY-BE...
...
I'M NOT COMFORT-ABLE TELLING SOMEONE WHO WON'T BECOME THE MANAGER ABOUT THE SECRET IN THE BASEMENT ..

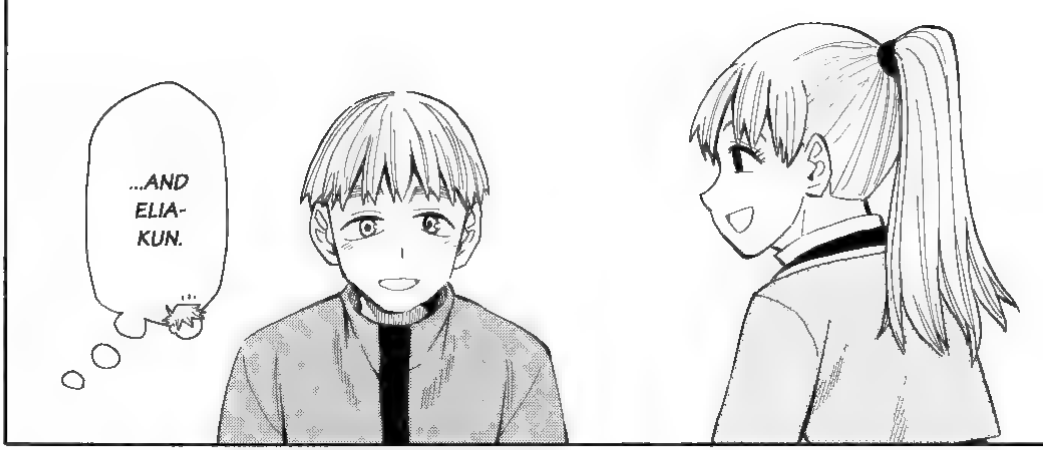
SHE'S AN ORDINARY GIRL.
DON'T.
IN THAT CASE, WE COULD HAVE CAROL...

LAFALLE!

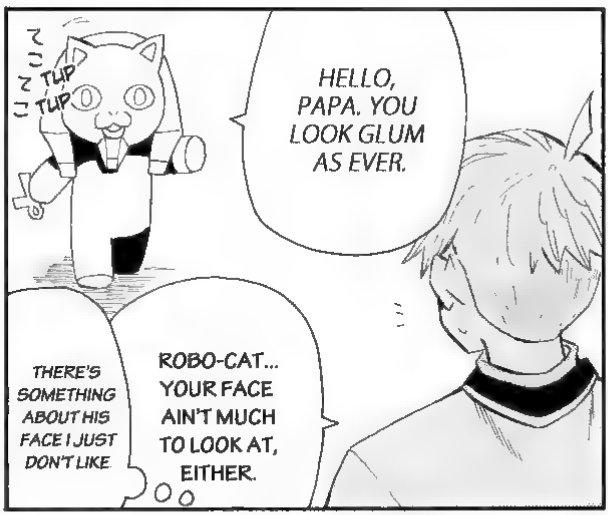
SHE COULD HANDLE THE FUTURE OF HUMANKIND.
SHE'S A PRODIGY.

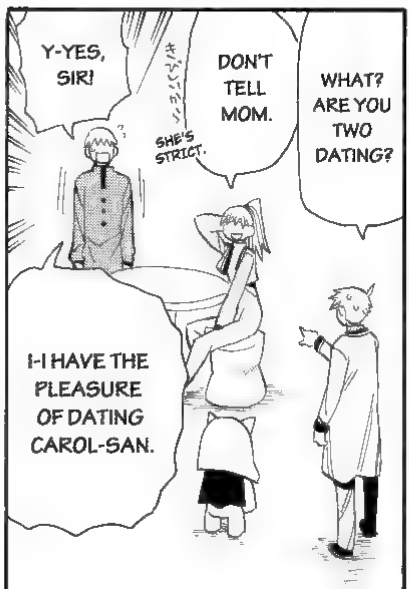
...
I'M GOING TO PATROL THE TOWER.

CAROL...
!


...AND ELIA-KUN.

OH.
DAD!

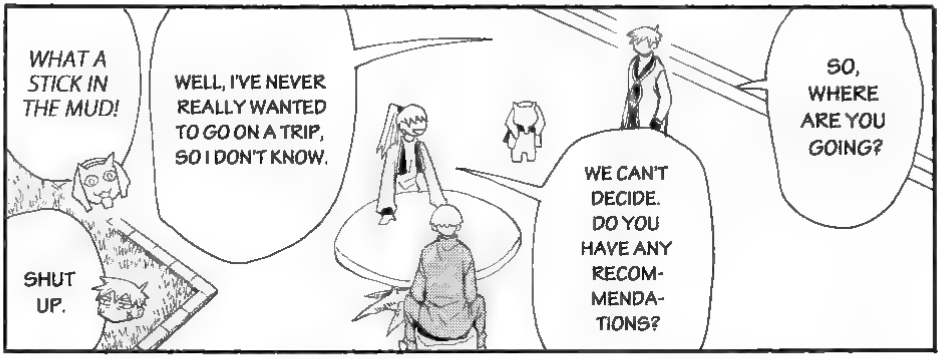

HELLO, PAPA. YOU LOOK GLUM AS EVER.
TUP TUP
ROBO-CAT... YOUR FACE AIN'T MUCH TO LOOK AT, EITHER.
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT HIS FACE I JUST DON'T LIKE

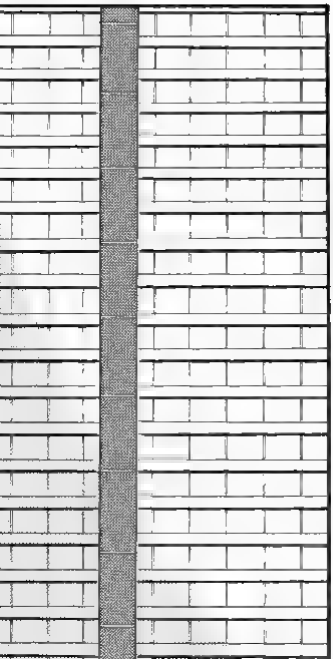

Y-YES, SIR!
DON'T TELL MOM.
WHAT? ARE YOU TWO DATING?
SHE'S STRICT.
I-I HAVE THE PLEASURE OF DATING CAROL-SAN.

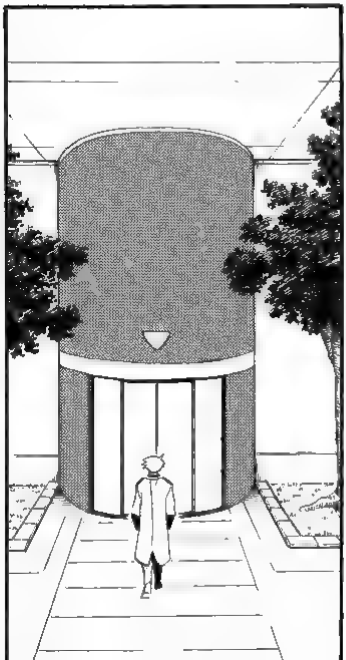
WHAT?
JUST THE TWO OF YOU?
NO, UM...

HELLO, MANAGER LAFALLE.
WHAT WERE YOU DISCUSS-ING?
HEY. YOU TWO SEEM CLOSE.
WE WERE PLANNING WHERE WE'LL GO ON OUR TRIP.

N-NO, THANK YOU, SIR!
THANKS FOR BEING A GOOD FRIEND TO HER, ELIA-KUN.
...
I SEE.

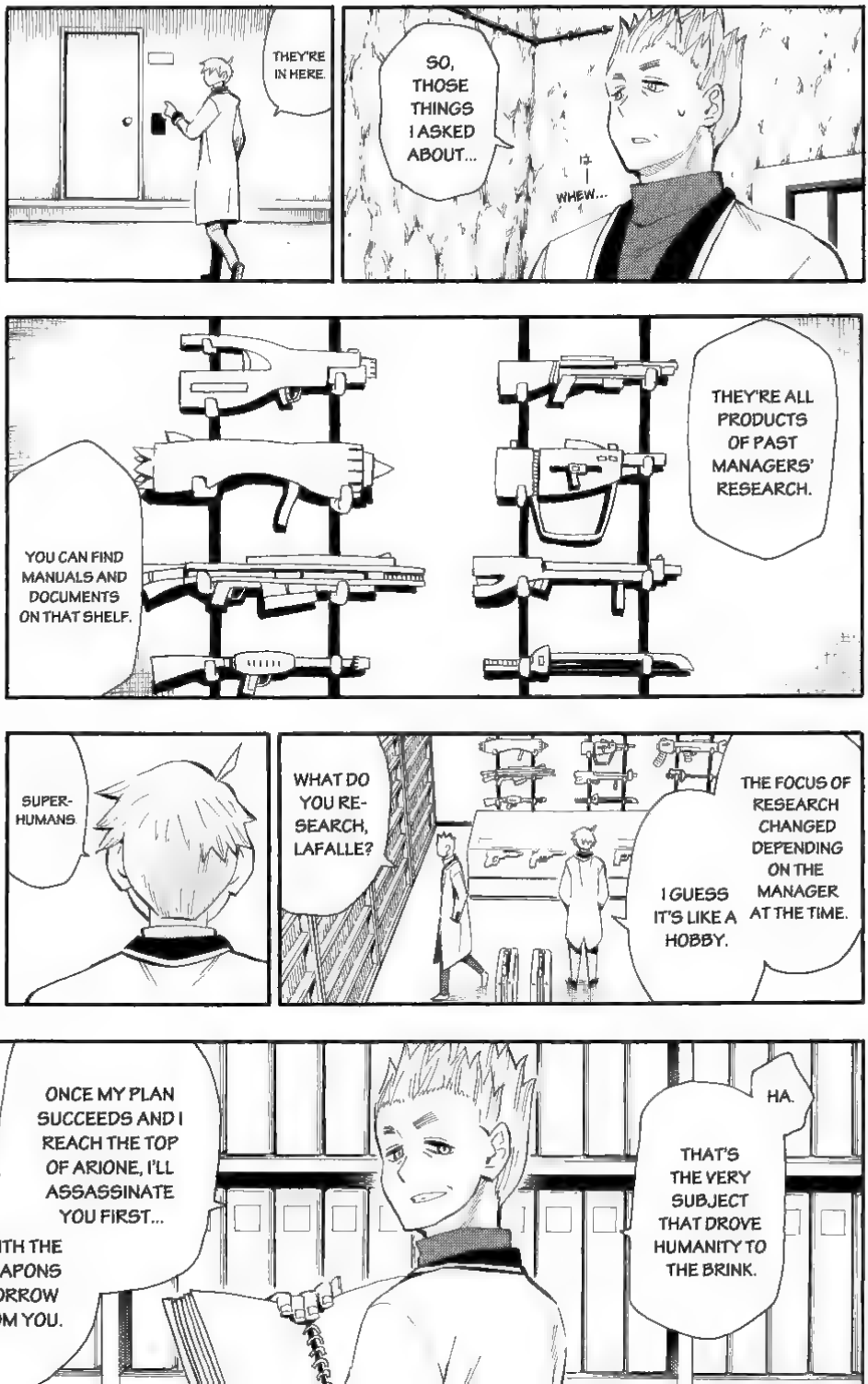

WHAT A STICK IN THE MUD!
SHUT UP.
WELL, I'VE NEVER REALLY WANTED TO GO ON A TRIP, SO I DON'T KNOW.
WE CAN'T DECIDE. DO YOU HAVE ANY RECOM-MENDA-TIONS?
SO, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?





HM?
...
GOOD WORK, SIR.
OKAY.
I'D BETTER GO.

I'M COUNTING ON YOU.
YOU HAVE A MESSAGE FROM ASH-SAMA.
I KNOW
AREA SPACIFICA.
I THOUGHT THE SAME THING THE FIRST TIME I CAME HERE.
YEAH. ああ
IT'S LIKE THE REMAINS OF AN ANCIENT CIVILIZATION. I HAD NO IDEA IT WAS SO HUGE..


THEY'RE IN HERE.
SO, THOSE THINGS I ASKED ABOUT...
WHEW...
YOU CAN FIND MANUALS AND DOCUMENTS ON THAT SHELF.
THEY'RE ALL PRODUCTS OF PAST MANAGERS' RESEARCH.
SUPER-HUMANS
WHAT DO YOU RE-SEARCH, LAFALLE?
I GUESS IT'S LIKE A HOBBY.
THE FOCUS OF RESEARCH CHANGED DEPENDING ON THE MANAGER AT THE TIME.
ONCE MY PLAN SUCCEEDS AND I REACH THE TOP OF ARIONE, I'LL ASSASSINATE YOU FIRST...
...WITH THE WEAPONS I BORROW FROM YOU.
HA.
THAT'S THE VERY SUBJECT THAT DROVE HUMANITY TO THE BRINK.

ISN'T THE SLEEPING TOWER ONE OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL TARGETS OF YOUR TERRORIST ATTACKS?
WHAT, ARE YOU BEGGING FOR YOUR LIFE?
HEH HEH HEH
ALSO, IT'S ARIONE, NOT ARION.
I THINK IT'D BE BETTER FOR YOU ARION-TYPES NOT TO KILL ME.
I'M THINKING OF HALTING THE SLEEPING TOWER.

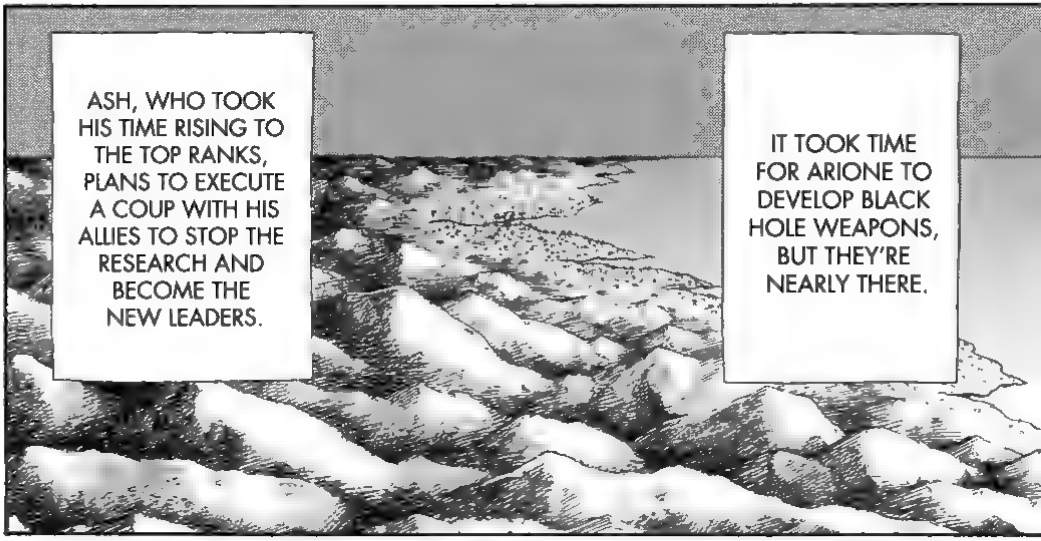
WHOA, THERE...
I'LL RELEASE THE SOULS OF THE NON-LIVING..
AND RETURN THEM TO HEAVEN
PFAH!

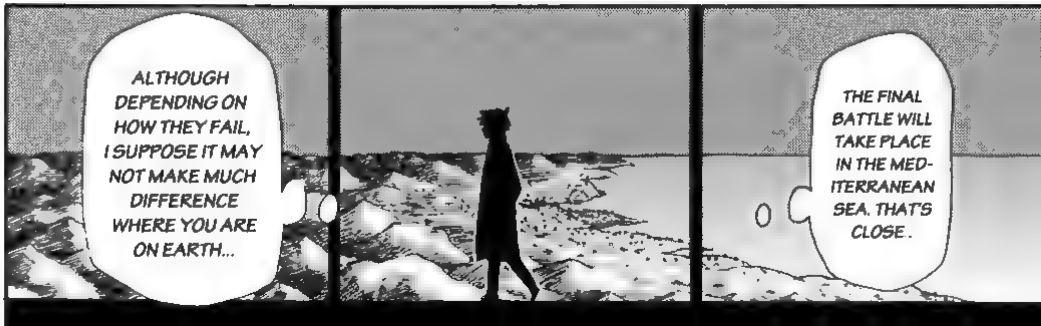
HA HA HA HA HA HA!
YOU'RE INCRED-IBLE!
YOU'D BE A SUPER MASS MUR-DERER!
THEY SAY A HUNDRED KILLS MAKES YOU A HERO, BUT YOU'D BE A GOD!
AFTER ALL, YOU'D BE KILLING A HUNDRED MILLION!

COM-
PARED
TO YOU
COM-
PARED
TO YOU...

YOU,
TOO.
HEH
HEH.

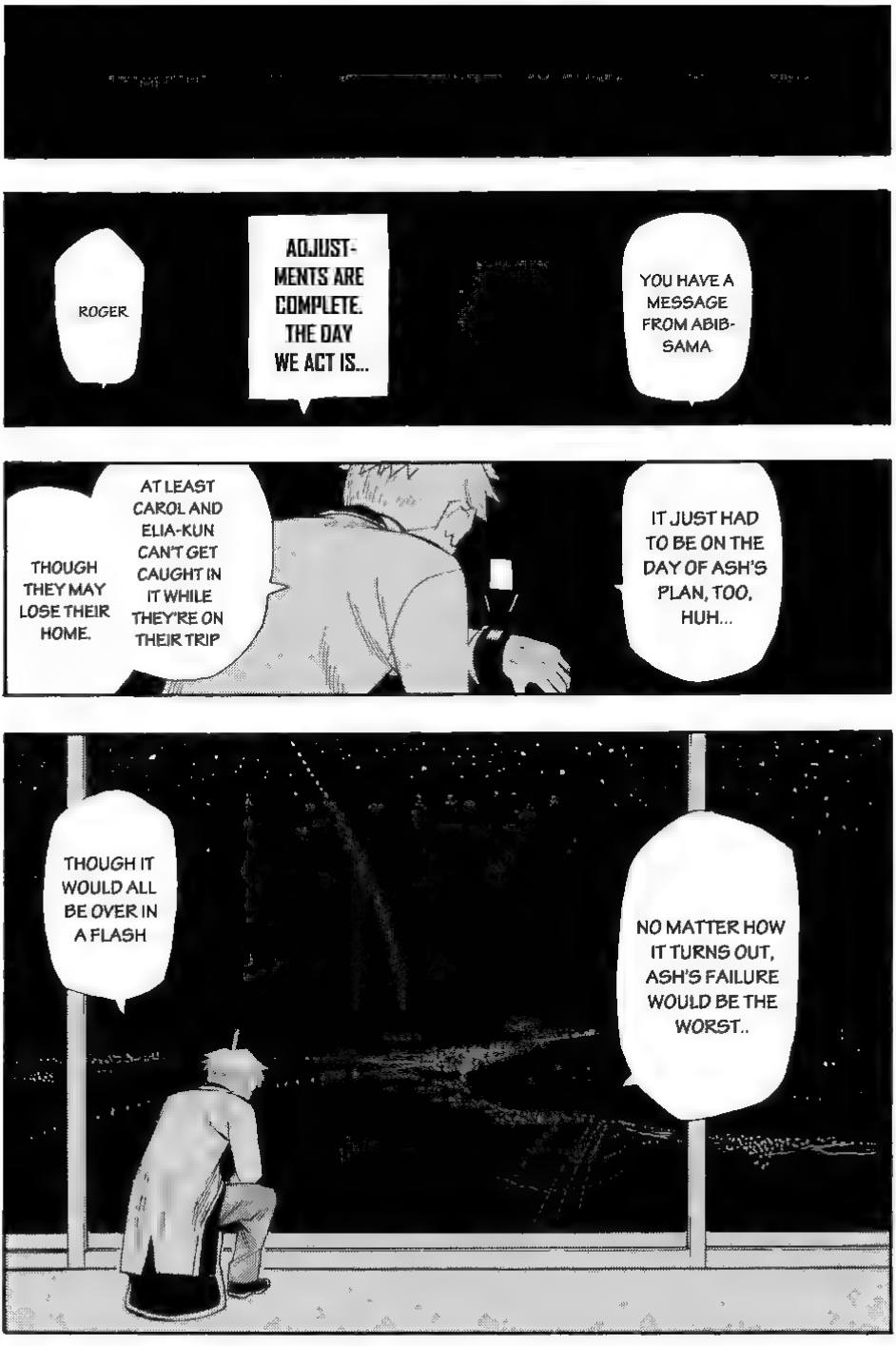
WE'LL HAVE
BIGGER
PROBLEMS
THAN THAT.
DO YOUR
BEST
IF YOU FAIL
TO STOP THE
BLACK HOLE
WEAPON
TEST...

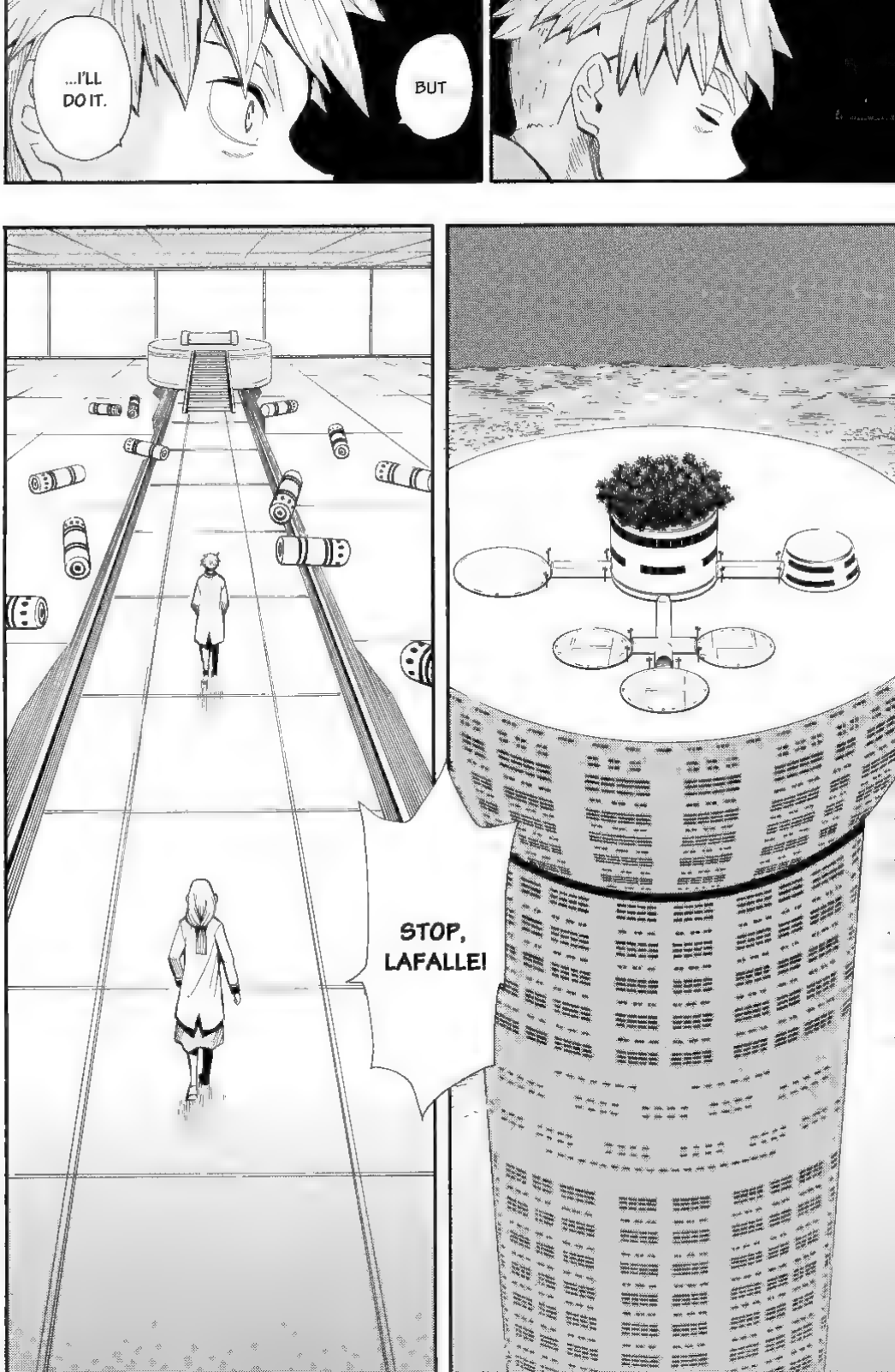

ASH, WHO TOOK
HIS TIME RISING TO
THE TOP RANKS,
PLANS TO EXECUTE
A COUP WITH HIS
ALLIES TO STOP THE
RESEARCH AND
BECOME THE
NEW LEADERS.
IT TOOK TIME
FOR ARIONE TO
DEVELOP BLACK
HOLE WEAPONS,
BUT THEY'RE
NEARLY THERE.


ALTHOUGH
DEPENDING ON
HOW THEY FAIL,
I SUPPOSE IT MAY
NOT MAKE MUCH
DIFFERENCE
WHERE YOU ARE
ON EARTH...
THE FINAL
BATTLE WILL
TAKE PLACE
IN THE MED-
ITERRANEAN
SEA. THAT'S
CLOSE.

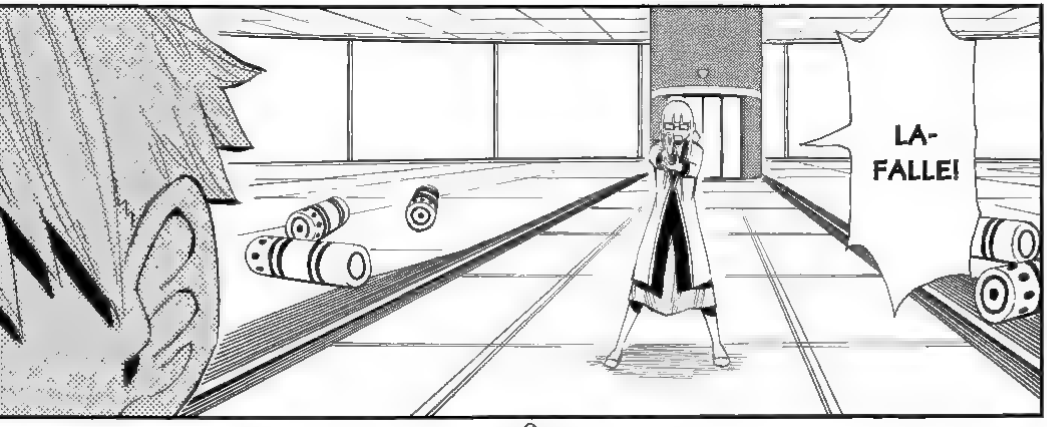
AHHH...
THAT'S THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE PLANET
CLICK CLACK
WHAT?
AAAH.
CLICK CLACK
CAROL, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT GOING TO NEW ZEALAND?
I'LL DISCUSS IT WITH ELIA.
CLICK CLACK
AHHH.
AS LONG AS YOU'RE TRAVELING, IT MIGHT BE NICE TO GO SOMEWHERE FAR.
I REMEMBER THE DAY I MET YOU AND MOM, TOO.
..I REMEMBER.
...REMEMBER THE BASEMENT?
...
DO YOU .
DON'T TELL ANYONE ELSE ABOUT IT.
GOOD GRIEF... IN THAT CASE, TAKE ELIA WITH YOU FROM NOW ON WHEN YOU DO YOUR RESEARCH.
WHAT?
I'VE ACTUALLY ALREADY...
SORRY.
THE CODE IS SPACIFICA.
YOU CAN USE IT ANY TIME.

...
...TO TAKE OVER.
I WANTED HIM...
I'M GOING TO MAKE HIM TAKE OVER THE BASEMENT.
...THAT'S IMPRESSIVE.
TIME MACHINES.
AHHH.
BY THE WAY, WHAT'S THE TOPIC OF YOUR RESEARCH?
EVEN THOUGH IT OBSERVES THE SAME POINT OF SPACE-TIME IN THE PAST .
.. EVERY TIME THE LIGHTNING STRIKES DIFFERENTLY
I'VE ACTUALLY ALREADY MADE A SMALL PROBE.
IT'S INTERESTING.
THINGS WILL BE FINE HERE AS LONG AS YOU'RE AROUND
. YOU TRULY ARE AMAZING.
AND HUMANKIND, TOO
...DOWN THERE.
THERE'S ACTUALLY AN EVEN LARGER AREA...
THE PROBE.
探査機
IT'S A SECRET
WHERE WERE YOU HIDING THAT?
I HADN'T NOTICED...


ROGER.
ADJUST-MENTS ARE COMPLETE. THE DAY WE ACT IS...
YOU HAVE A MESSAGE FROM ABIB-SAMA
THOUGH THEY MAY LOSE THEIR HOME.
AT LEAST CAROL AND ELIA-KUN CAN'T GET CAUGHT IN IT WHILE THEY'RE ON THEIR TRIP
IT JUST HAD TO BE ON THE DAY OF ASH'S PLAN, TOO, HUH...
THOUGH IT WOULD ALL BE OVER IN A FLASH
NO MATTER HOW IT TURNS OUT, ASH'S FAILURE WOULD BE THE WORST..


...I'LL DO IT.
BUT
STOP, LAFALLE!

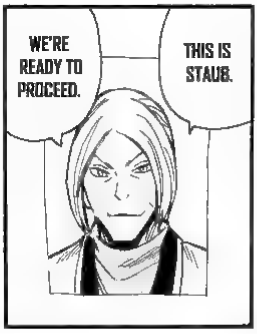
ARE YOU THE ONE WHO SHUT DOWN THE TOWER ROBOTS' SECURITY SYSTEM?
WHY DID YOU COME HERE?!

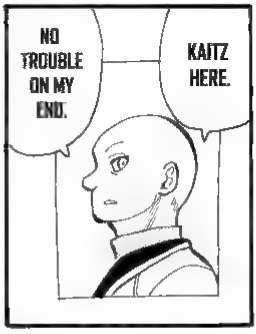

LA-FALLE!

ANSWER ME!

I DON'T HAVE THE SKILLS.
BUT...
...THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO DO.

WHORF.
LIKE-WISE.


THIS IS STAUB.
WE'RE READY TO PROCEED.

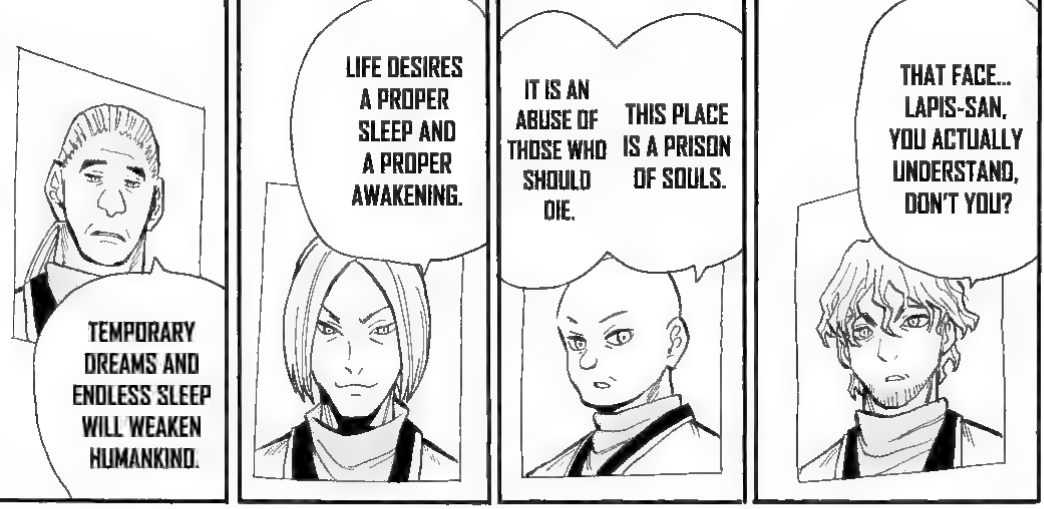

KAITZ HERE.
NO TROUBLE ON MY END.

ABIB HERE.
WAS EVERY-ONE SUC-CESS-FUL?

KEEP IT TOGETHER, LAFALLE-SAN.
THIS IS YOUR PLAN. HOW CAN WE ACT IF YOU DON'T?
I'LL HANDLE IT.
LAFALLE HERE.
THE OTHER INDIVIDUAL WITH MANAGERIAL AUTHORITY HAS CAUGHT UP TO ME.

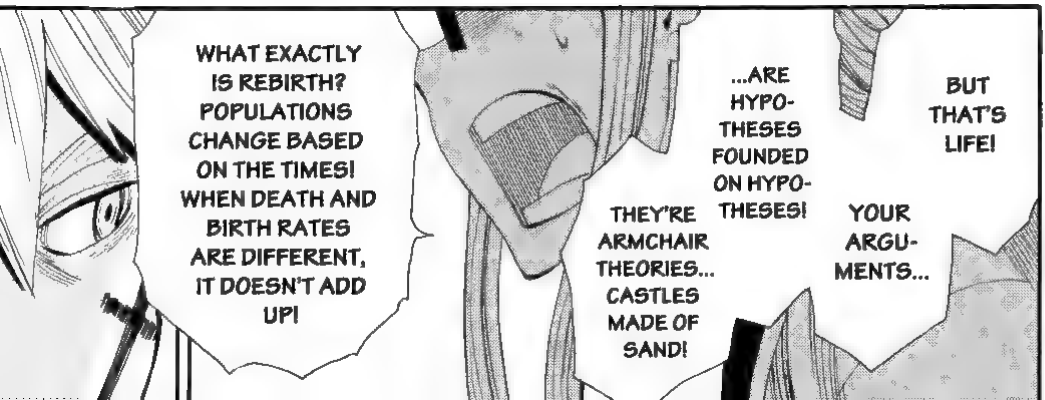
...WHO SYMPATHIZED WITH MY BELIEFS.
THEY'RE MANAGERS OF SLEEPING TOWERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES
WHO ARE THEY?
WHAT'S GOING ON?
...AND THE NON-LIVING RELEASED.
THAT THE SLEEPING TOWERS MUST BE STOPPED...
..ARE YOUR BELIEFS?
AND WHAT...
I WILL SAVE HUMANKIND.
I DO UNDERSTAND.
R-RELEASED?!
DO YOU EVEN UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?!
LET ME ASK YOU, LAPIS.
BY KILLING A HUNDRED MILLION PEOPLE?!
SAVE THEM?!

THEY'RE ALIVE!
...!
...THE NON-LIVING ARE ALIVE?
CAN YOU TRULY SAY...
BECAUSE THEY WON'T DIE PROPERLY, THEY CAN'T BE REBORN PROPERLY EITHER.
WE ARE FORCING THEIR SOULS TO REMAIN HERE.
BECAUSE HUMANITY'S CIRCLE OF LIFE ISN'T COMPLETE.
...WE'RE ON THE VERGE OF EXTINCTION.
BECAUSE THAT CYCLE ISN'T FUNCTIONING PROPERLY...
...!


TEMPORARY DREAMS AND ENDLESS SLEEP WILL WEAKEN HUMANKIND.
LIFE DESIRES A PROPER SLEEP AND A PROPER AWAKENING.
IT IS AN ABUSE OF THOSE WHO SHOULD DIE.
THIS PLACE IS A PRISON OF SOULS.
THAT FACE... LAPIS-SAN, YOU ACTUALLY UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU?

YOU CAN'T KILL THEM!
THEIR CELLS ARE STILL TRYING TO LIVE!
BUT...
BUT THEY'RE STILL ALIVE!

THEY ARE ONLY RESPONDING TO STIMULI.
CELLS HAVE NO WILL.


WHAT EXACTLY IS REBIRTH? POPULATIONS CHANGE BASED ON THE TIMES! WHEN DEATH AND BIRTH RATES ARE DIFFERENT, IT DOESN'T ADD UP!
THEY'RE ARMCHAIR THEORIES... CASTLES MADE OF SAND!
...ARE HYPOTHESES FOUNDED ON HYPOTHESES!
YOUR ARGUMENTS...
BUT THAT'S LIFE!

DON'T MOVE!
WE'VE HAD...
...A FALLING OUT
...
LA-FALLE...
DON'T MAKE ME SHOOT.
I'VE SEEN ALL SIDES OF YOU...
WE WORKED TOGETHER, MET CAROL, AND LIVED TOGETHER.
YOU'RE NOT MY TYPE...
...BUT I THINK OF YOU AS MY FAMILY.
AND WHEN YOU FINALLY TELL ME...
...YOU SAY YOU'LL KILL A HUNDRED MILLION NON-LIVING... YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS!
I THOUGHT WE HAD GROWN CLOSER...
...BUT YOU WERE WORRIED ABOUT SOMETHING... THINKING ABOUT SOMETHING...
...AND WOULD NEVER DISCUSS IT WITH ME...

HOWEVER, WE'RE ALSO MOTIVATED BY EMOTION.
WE WANT TO SAVE HUMANITY.
LAPIS-SAN.
YOU ARE NOT WRONG.
...
YES.
SEE YOU LATER.
WE'LL DO WHAT WE HAVE TO DO.
SEE YOU LATER.
LA-FALLE-SAN.
I'M TERMI-NATING THE CALL.
STEP
SWISH
LAFALLE!

DON'T GET IN MY WAY!
LAPIS!
BANG

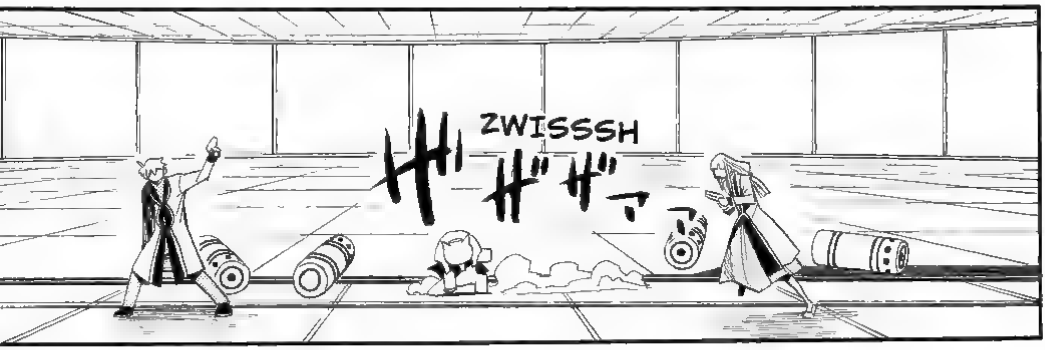
WHUD
URGH!
ガン
PTCHEW
WAIT...
...LA-
FALLE!
I WONDER
WHY...
STRANGELY
ENOUGH...

. THIS WAS THE MORE NATURAL RELATION-SHIP FOR US
...I FELT LIKE. .
ポーン
DING
ウィーーーーン
WHIRRR

CIRCLE 29
LAFALLE 8

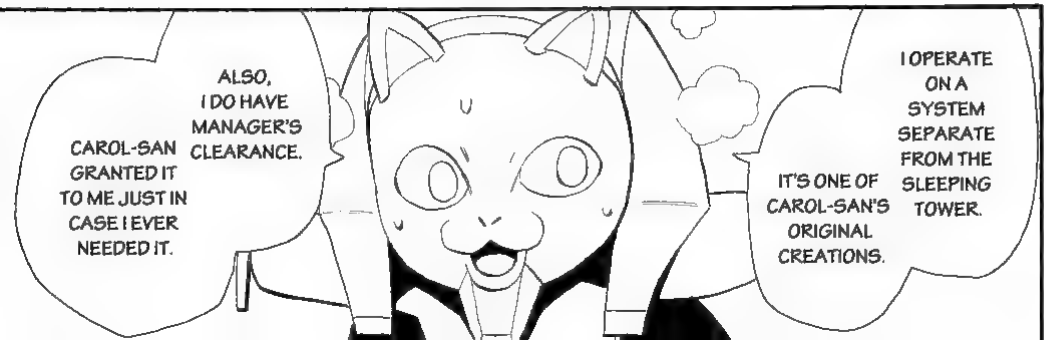
BANG
LAFALLE!
BANG
HUH?!
?!
DASH
HGCK!

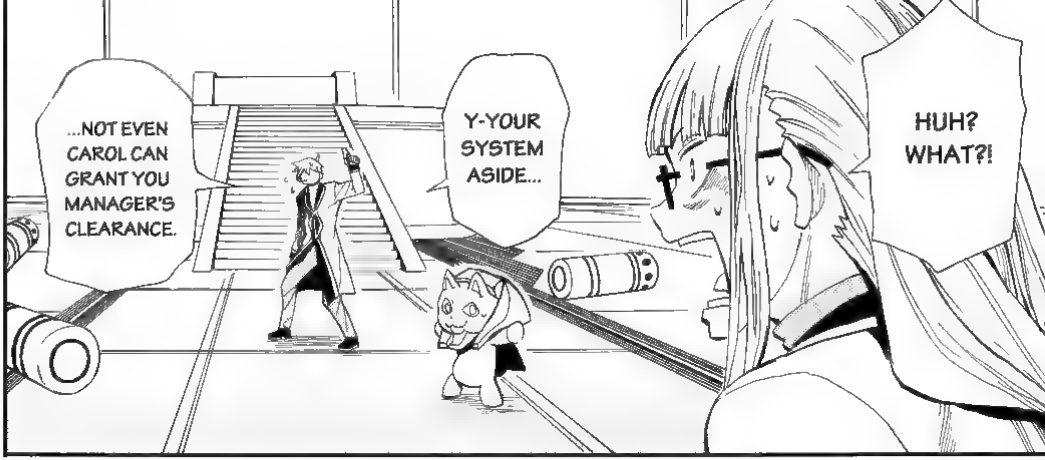
COUPLES SHOULDN'T FIGHT!
ZWISSSH
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!

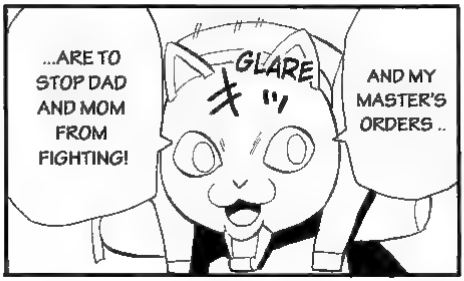

ZWISSSH

...AND COMING HERE REQUIRES A MANAGER'S CLEARANCE!
THE SLEEPING TOWER'S ROBOTS SHOULDN'T BE OPERATIONAL RIGHT NOW...

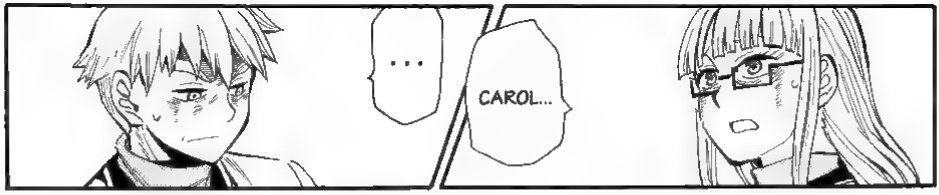
WHY?
R-ROBO-CAT?


CAROL-SAN GRANTED IT TO ME JUST IN CASE I EVER NEEDED IT.
ALSO, I DO HAVE MANAGER'S CLEARANCE.
IT'S ONE OF CAROL-SAN'S ORIGINAL CREATIONS.
I OPERATE ON A SYSTEM SEPARATE FROM THE SLEEPING TOWER.


...NOT EVEN CAROL CAN GRANT YOU MANAGER'S CLEARANCE.
Y-YOUR SYSTEM ASIDE...
HUH? WHAT?!


...ARE TO STOP DAD AND MOM FROM FIGHTING!
GLARE
AND MY MASTER'S ORDERS ..

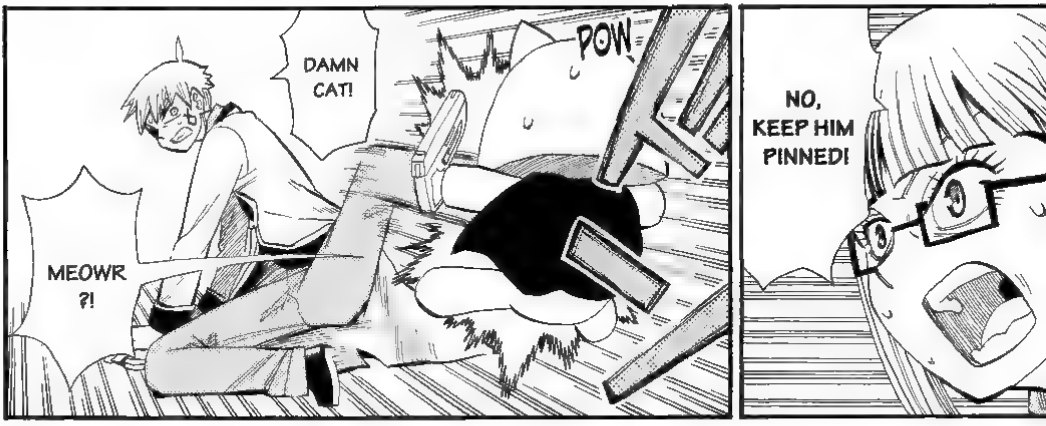
THAT IS MY MASTER CAROL-SAN!
FANFARE
MAKING THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE!


...
CAROL...

MR. DAD? WHERE ARE YOU--?
DASH
WHAT?!
...BUT YOU MUSTN'T USE GUNS. GUNS ARE...
I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE FIGHTING..
TURN

STAY OUT OF THIS, ROBO-CAT!
7" 4 SNAP
MRS. MOM, YOU MUSTN'T USE GUNS, EITHER!
STOP, LAFALLE!
...RAWRRR!
GRRR...
SNATCH
?!
HISS!
JUMP
DASH
SPIN
HHWZZH

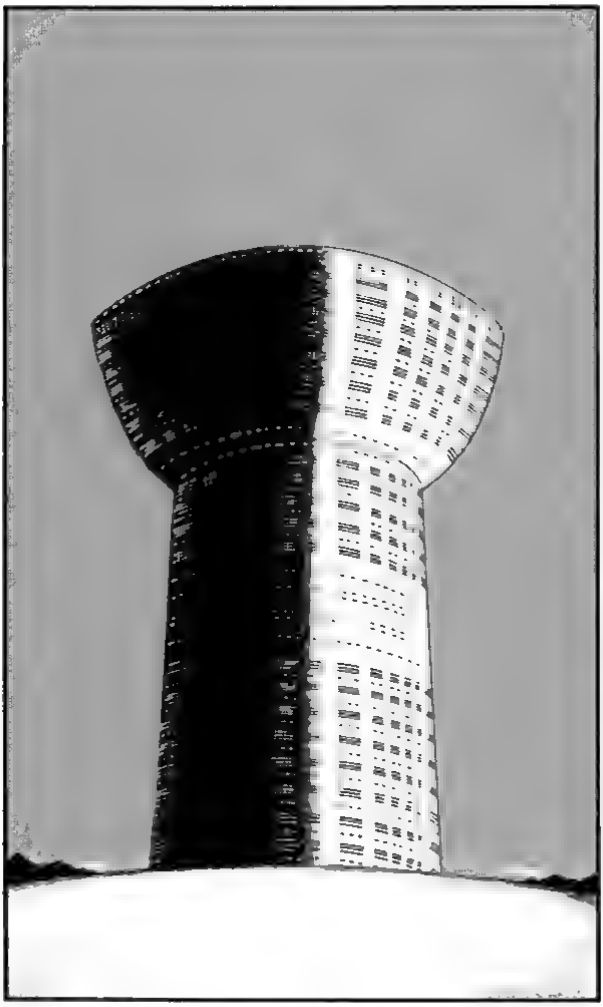
ROBO-CAT! GIVE ME BACK MY--!
MROOOW!
KLUMP
UGH!
WHAM


NO, KEEP HIM PINNED!
POW
DAMN CAT!
MEOWR ?!

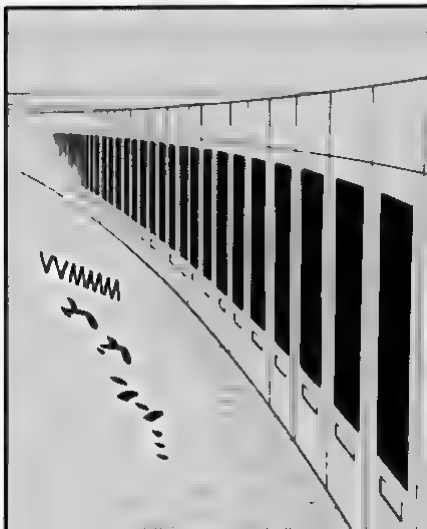
ACCESS!
HEY!
WHAT, YOU'RE THAT WEAK?
HOW COME YOU COULD MOVE SO FAST JUST NOW?
WHUD
UGH...
GRAB

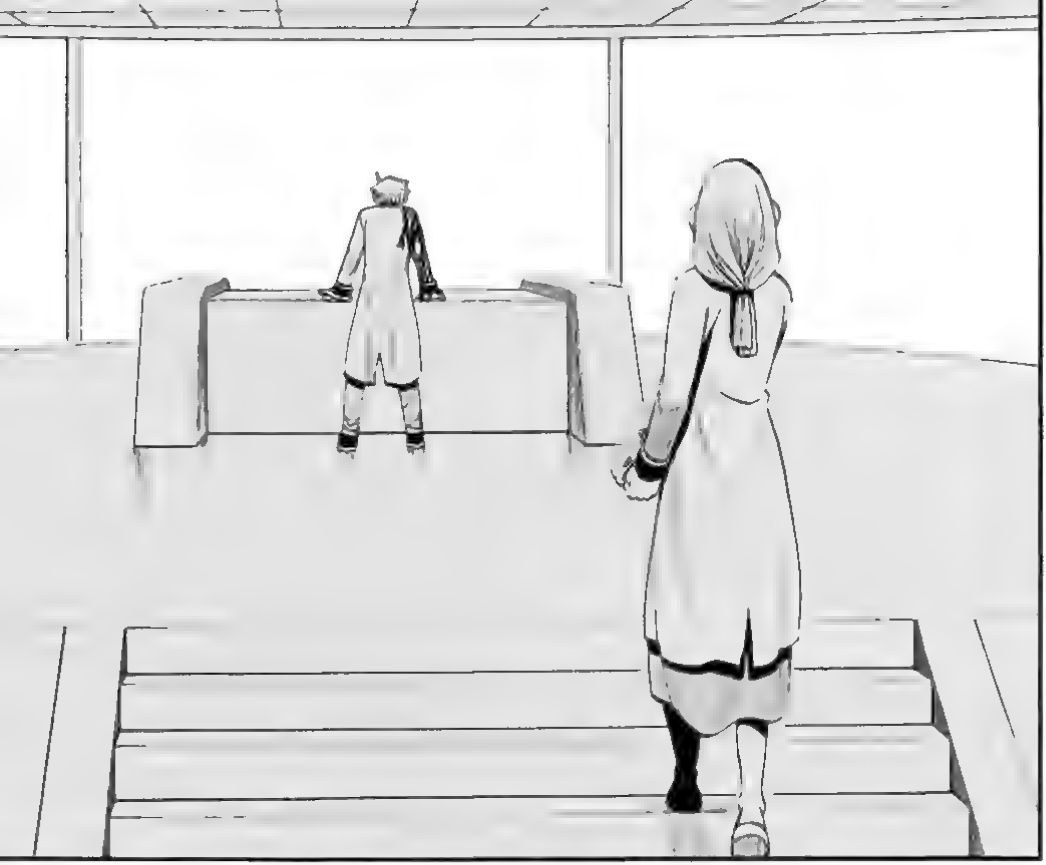
CODE...
...SPIRIT CIRCLE!
TURN ALL NON-LIVING SUPPORT SYSTEMS...
...OFF!
I DON'T KNOW WHO, BUT SOMEONE CHOSE "SPIRIT CIRCLE" AS THE DEEPEST SYSTEM ACCESS CODE OF THE SLEEPING TOWER.
THE MOMENT I SAID THOSE WORDS, I WONDERED IF PERHAPS I WAS BEING CONTROLLED BY SOME KIND OF CURSE, AND A SINGLE DROP OF DOUBT AND REGRET STAINED MY HEART.

SHUTTING DOWN SYSTEMS.



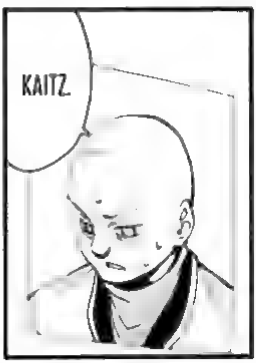
WHHHMM


WMMM



WE JUST...
...KILLED ONE HUNDRED MILLION PEOPLE.

THIS IS LAFALLE.


KAITZ.

ABIB HERE.

WHORF

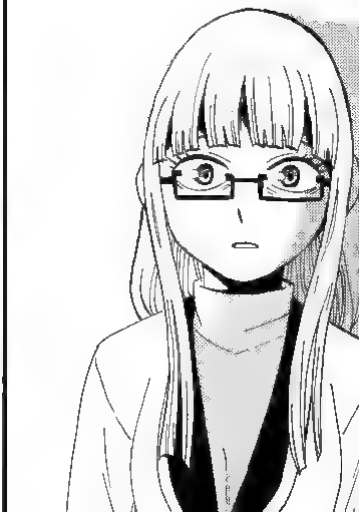
STAUB.

AAAAAH!
BANG
LEAP

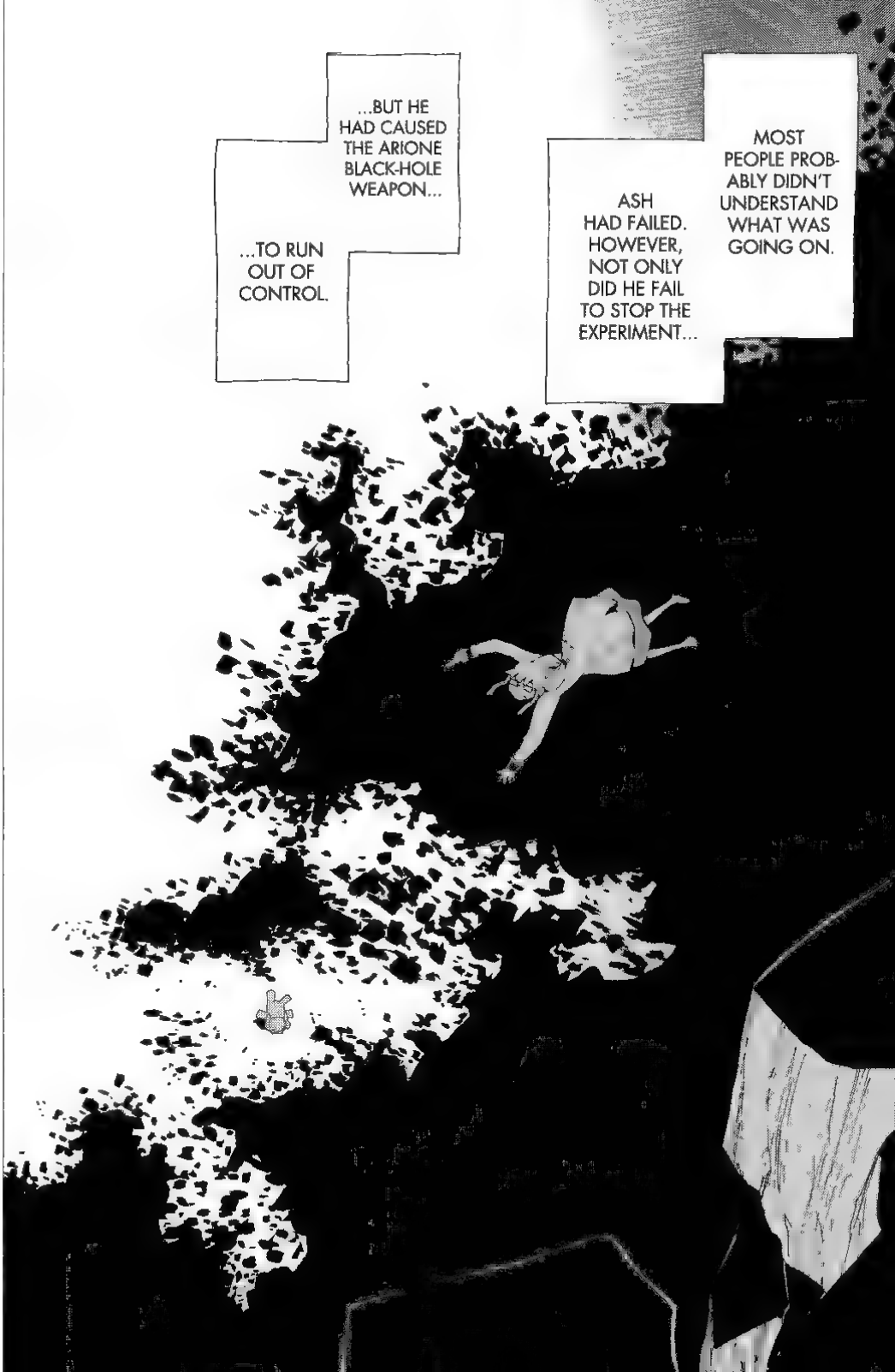
I HAVE A DREAM.
I WANT TO BECOME A CRAFTS-MAN LIKE MR. FLORS.
I'LL CREATE SOMETHING CUTE LIKE THE CAT SPHINX...
...AND MAKE LOCA AND EVERYONE HAPPY.

...TO STOP EVERYONE FROM FIGHTING.
SOME-THING FUN, THAT MAKES PEOPLE FEEL GOOD...
BZRAK
BZZT
WHAT...
...WAS THAT?

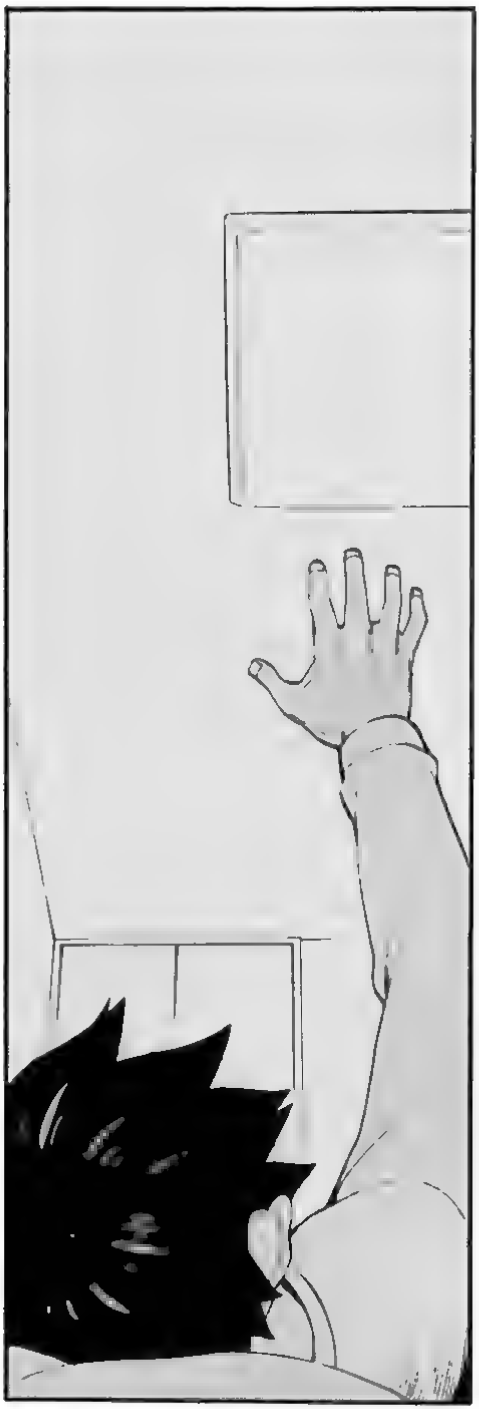
IN THE NEXT MOMENT ...



...IT
SUDDENLY
HAPPENED.


MOST PEOPLE PROBABLY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS GOING ON.
ASH HAD FAILED. HOWEVER, NOT ONLY DID HE FAIL TO STOP THE EXPERIMENT...
...BUT HE HAD CAUSED THE ARIONE BLACK-HOLE WEAPON...
...TO RUN OUT OF CONTROL.

IN A SINGLE MOMENT, EVERYTHING TURNED INTO NOTHING.
OUR DIS-PUTE...
...THE UNENDING SUFFERING OF THE NON-LIVING...
...AND EVEN THE CONFLICT OVER THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY.
EVERY-THING THAT HAD LIVED.

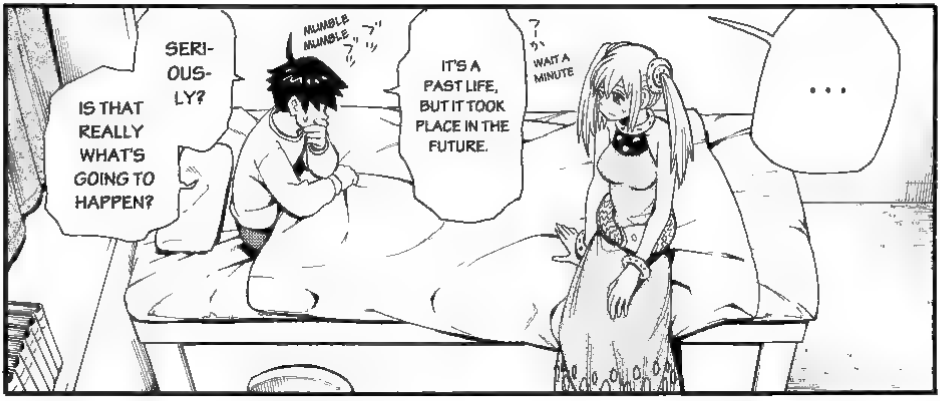


IN THE END, I SAW...
. A WATER-FALL OF LIGHT FALLING INTO THE SKY.

THE...
LURCH
THE EARTH WAS DE-STROYED?!
WHOA!
H-HEY?
おい、おい?
WHAT'S WRONG, FUUTA?
DID SOME-THING HAP-PEN?
I-IT'S NOTHING! I WAS HALF-ASLEEP!
I WAS DREAM-ING!
BAM BAM
BA-DUM BA-DUM

I'M BACK, RUNE.
OH. YEAH...

WEL-COME BACK...
...MAS-TER.
UM...


IS THAT REALLY WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN?
SERI-OUS-LY?
MUMBLE MUMBLE
IT'S A PAST LIFE, BUT IT TOOK PLACE IN THE FUTURE.
WAIT A MINUTE
...

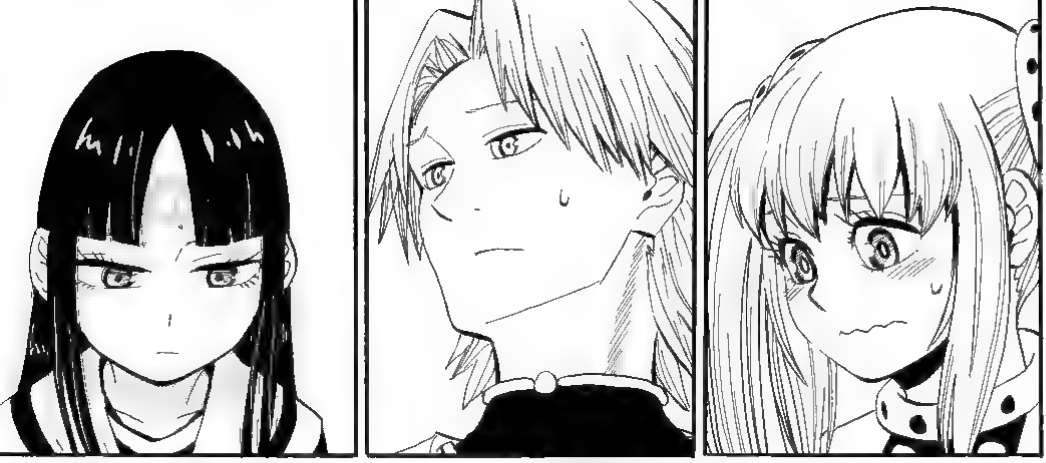
...

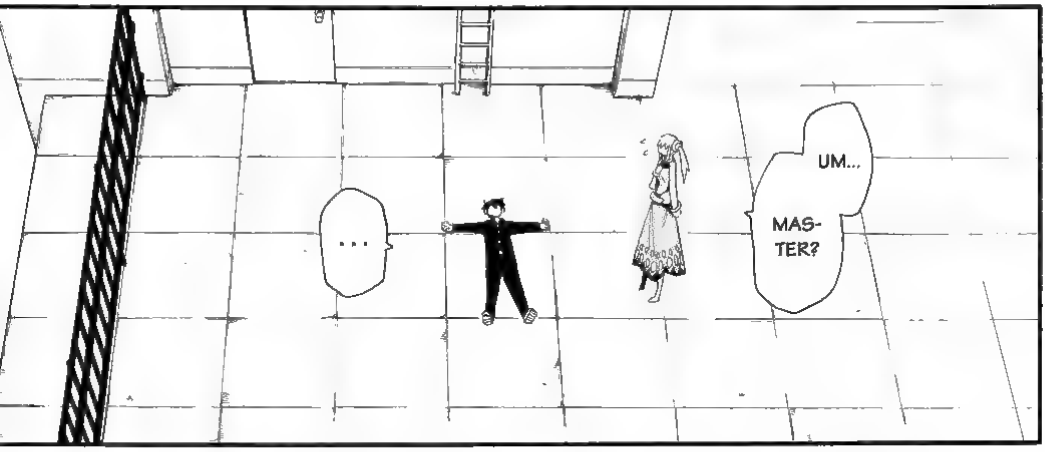
THE LAST TIME I SAW ISHIGAMI-SAN'S SPIRIT CIRCLE, THERE WERE FIVE FLAMES...
WHOOSH
SNIFF

I'LL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL WHEN I TALK TO HER. THOUGH SHE MAY SEE IT EVENTUALLY, TELLING HER WOULD BE TOO GREAT A SHOCK.
THAT ENDING... BUT MAYBE LAPIS DOESN'T KNOW. I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT'S THE END OF THE WORLD...
THE FIRST ONE IS FORTUNA'S STORY THAT I HAVEN'T SEEN YET, AND THE FIFTH IS THE STORY OF HOUTAROU AND IWANA.
HAS ISHIGAMI-SAN SEEN THE FUTURISTIC WORLD OF LAFALLE AND LAPIS?

...
...
O-OH.
...
GOOD MORNING
GOOD MORNING.

WH-WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THAT PAST LIFE?
...!
ISHIGAMI-SAN HAS SEEN IT.
YOUR MELANCHOLY IS JUST LIKE LAFALLE'S .. THOUGH I SUPPOSE YOU ARE HIM.
SKRUT
DID YOU ALREADY SEE THE FUTURE?
BESIDES, THE FUTURE WORLD HASN'T BEEN COMPLETELY SORTED OUT YET...
...BUT THERE IS ONE THING THAT'S CERTAIN.
I'M NOT SURE. I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED AT THE VERY END.
...ARE A DANGEROUS INDIVIDUAL.
YOU...
THE ROOF.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING? HOMEROOM IS STARTING.
SKRUT
...




...
UM...
MAS-
TER?

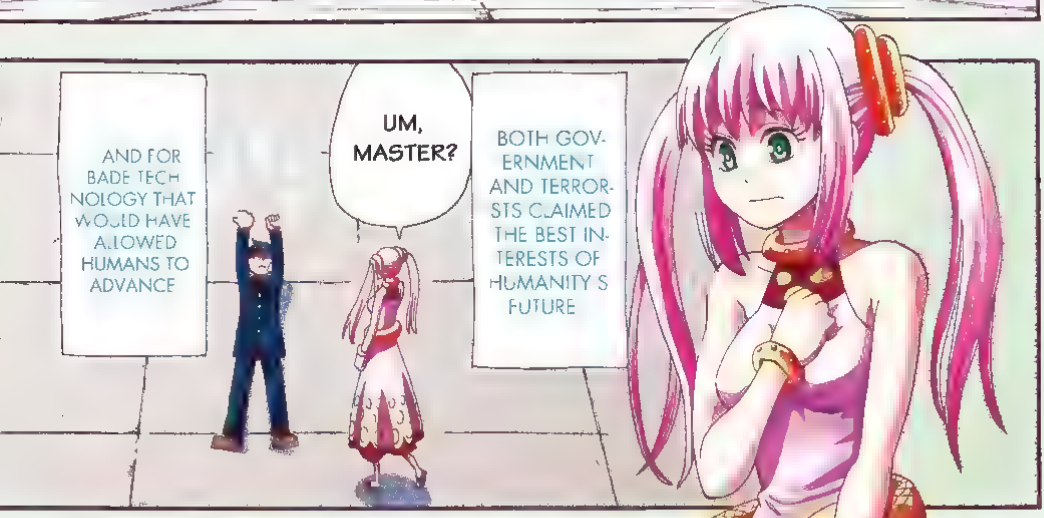
スッ...
SHFF
DON'T BOTHER ME, RUNE.
FWISH
I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT IT, SO I'M GOING TO WATCH THE NEXT ONE HERE.

AH... AAAH!
AH...

WAAAH!
AAAH!
SNATCH
WHAT ?!
HEY!

R-RUNE?
WHAT --?

34TH CENTURY EARTH HUMANKIND WAS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION
THE PAST LIFE I SAW WAS THE FUTURE


AND FOR BADE TECH NOLOGY THAT WOULD HAVE ALLOWED HUMANS TO ADVANCE
UM, MASTER?
BOTH GOV- ERNMENT AND TERROR- STS CLAIMED THE BEST IN- TERESTS OF HUMANITY S FUTURE

DON'T BOTHER ME, RUNE.
...
I HAVE TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENS NEXT
I'M GOING TO WATCH THE REST HERE.
I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT IT.
JLTMATELY THE EARTH WAS DESTROYED WHEN THE BLACK HOLE WEAPON RAN OUT OF CONTROL

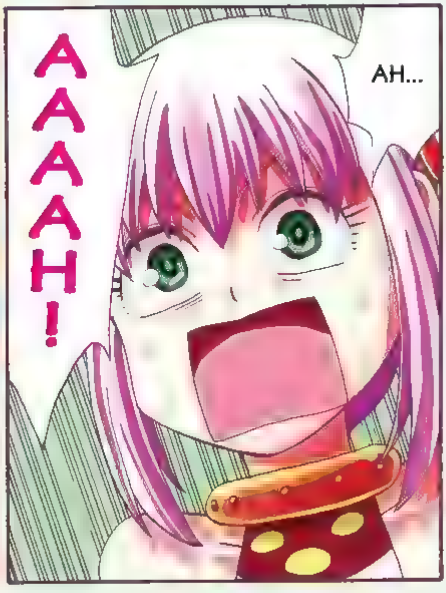
AND THE CULMINATION OF ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED IN THE PAST AND WOULD HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE?
WAS THAT REALLY THE FINAL DESTINATION
OF EVERY HUMAN LIVING ON EARTH

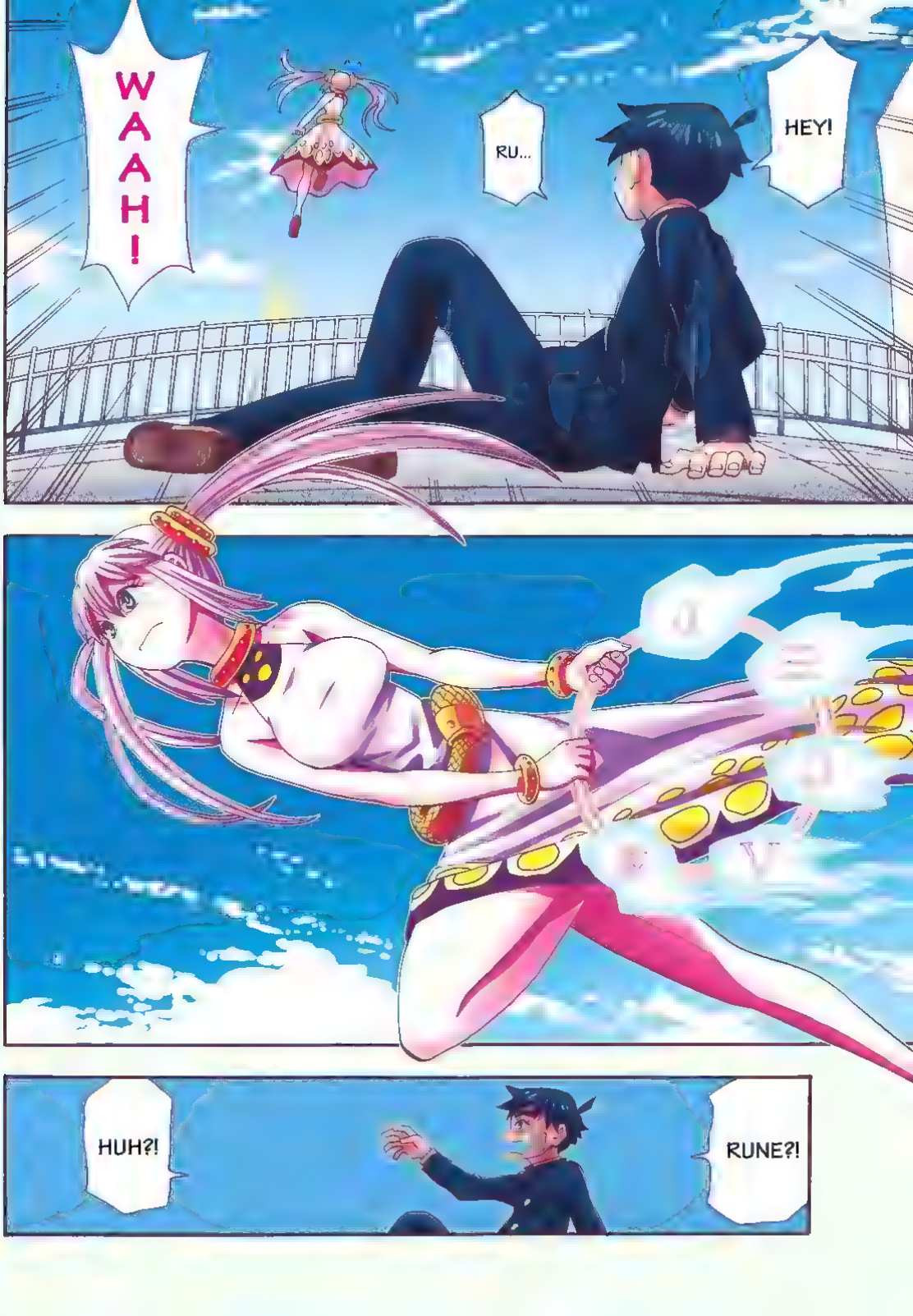
THEN FROM HERE ON
. AND I DON'T KNOW THE MEANING OF HUMAN-KIND'S EX-ISTENCE
SHOULD THAT BE THE CASE

SURELY YOU KNOW SOME-THING!
FOR TUNA!
..EVEN IF MY NEXT PAST LIFE IS DURING A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT ERA AND PROVIDES ME WITH NO CLUES.

SNATCH
AAAAH!!
WHAT ?!

?!
JUMP

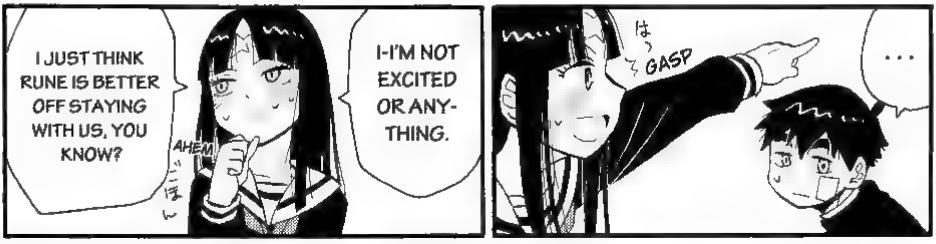

AAAAH!
AH...


WAAH!
RU...
HEY!
HUH?!
RUNE?!

YOU TRIED TO SEE YOUR NEXT PAST LIFE?
WHAT ARE YOU, STUPID?!
YOU SAW HOUTAROU'S THE MIDDLE OF LAST WEEK AND LAFALLE'S OVER THE WEEKEND...
...AND NOW IT'S MONDAY!
...I WAS SLEEPING.
YOU WERE IN SUCH A HURRY. . WHAT WERE YOU DOING SUNDAY?
IN FACT, IF YOU SAW IT SATURDAY...
YOU'RE NOT GIVING YOURSELF ENOUGH TIME.
I'M NOT BEING CONSUMED BY THE PERSONALITIES OF MY PAST LIVES.
DON'T POKE ME.
I'M FINE.
I'M NOT SURPRISED RUNE INTERRUPTED YOUR ATTEMPT TO DIVE INTO YOUR PAST LIVES.
POKE POKE
IT'S TOTALLY AFFECTING YOU.

IF YOU PROMISE NOT TO SEE YOUR PAST LIVES FOR A WHILE...
...I'LL TELL HER TO COME BACK.
I'LL GO LOOK FOR RUNE NOW.
HMPH I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT.
YOU DON'T?
NOT THAT I CARE, THOUGH.

THE THREE OF US WILL HAVE FUN LIVING TOGETHER!
GREAT IDEA!
JUST FOR A WHILE.
THEN I'LL TAKE CARE OF RUNE.
...CAN'T PROMISE THAT.
I...


I JUST THINK RUNE IS BETTER OFF STAYING WITH US, YOU KNOW?
AHEM
I-I'M NOT EXCITED OR ANYTHING.
GASP
...

YOUR PAST LIVES HAVE A STRONG INFLUENCE ON YOU.
YOU DO SEEM MORE MATURE THAN USUAL, FUUTA-KUN.
THANKS, EAST.
I'LL GO LOOK FOR HER AFTER SCHOOL, TOO.
IT'S BETTER THAN HAVING HER MISSING

THAT'S JUST HOW THINGS ARE.
I'M A KID.
JUST AN ORDINARY SNOT-NOSED BRAT.
LAPIS, HUH?
LET'S GO, LAPIS.
OUR BREAK IS ENDING.
...IT'S EASIER TO HATE YOU.
...JUMBLE UP YOUR PERSON-ALITY...
WHEN YOUR PAST LIVES...
"OKEYA FUUTA-KUN" IS A GOOD KID.

...REGARDLESS OF WHETHER OR NOT YOU'RE BEING INFLUENCED...
EITHER WAY...
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
STEP
LIKE LAFALLE AND FORTUNA.
...YOU'LL BECOME A HARBINGER OF DISASTER.
...IF I LET YOU LIVE, SOMEDAY...
I HOPE YOU'LL REMAIN SOMEONE I CAN HATE FOREVER.
I'LL TURN MYSELF IN AND GO TO JUVENILE DETENTION.
WHAT WILL YOU DO AFTER YOU KILL ME?
MURDERERS DON'T LEAD VERY HAPPY LIVES IN THIS ERA.
LA... ISHIGAMI-SAN, YOU WANT TO KILL ME, RIGHT?
...

...WITH THE AMOUNT OF DATA AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET THESE DAYS. .
...BOTH THE MURDER AND CULPRIT WILL BE FORGOTTEN BY THE TIME I FINISH MY COURSES.
YOU'VE REALLY THOUGHT THIS THROUGH
EVEN IF MY PERSONAL INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE ONLINE...
HUH...
WOW.
I'LL TAKE CORRESPOND-ENCE COURSES TO FINISH HIGH SCHOOL AND THEN GO TO COLLEGE.
ONCE I GET OUT...
OF COURSE.

FUUTA, LET'S GO TO OUR CLUB.
I'D BETTER GO LOOK FOR RUNE.
OKAY.
キーン
DING DONG
コーン…
?
CARO--
DAD.
MAYBE HE'S STILL LOOKING FOR ANOTHER STASH..
FUUTA'S BEEN ACTING WEIRD LATELY.
I WONDER WHAT'S UP?
…
SORRY. I'M BUSY TODAY.
STEP
AGAIN?
WHAT'S GOING ON WITH YOU THESE DAYS?

100
JEEZ, RUNE...
WHERE DID SHE GO?

SHE DOESN'T...
...HAVE ANYWHERE ELSE TO GO.

LET ME STAY WITH YOU.

WHAT?
YOU'RE RIGHT. IT'S FUUTA.
HEY, IT'S FUUTA.
YO!

DAIKI...
TETSU, UMI...

HAVE YOU NOT BEEN HOME YET?
WHY ARE YOU IN YOUR UNIFORM?

NONO LEFT A LITTLE EARLY, SO WE MISSED HER.

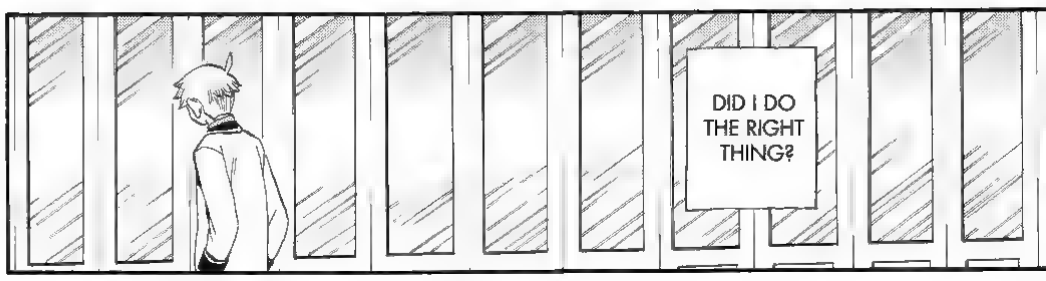
ALL THREE OF US.
WE GOT OUT OF OUR CLUBS AT THE SAME TIME.

じっ
STARE
SHE LEFT RIGHT AFTER SCHOOL, SO I THOUGHT SHE WAS WITH YOU.
FUUTA, YOU'RE NOT WITH KOUKO?
IT'S NOTH-ING.
NO...
こっ
はっ
GASP
WHY ARE YOU STARING AT ME?
WH-WHAT?
また
AGAIN.
HUH?
WHAT?
IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR LOVE LIFE, YOU CAN TALK TO ME. ARE YOU INTO NONO OR KOUKO?
I'LL BEAT THE CRAP OUT OF HIM.
IF SOMEONE'S BULLYING YOU, LET ME KNOW.
FUUTA, IF YOU START NOW, YOU'LL STILL MAKE IT IN TIME FOR HIGH SCHOOL EXAMS.
I'LL HELP YOU.

GO HOME BEFORE IT GETS TOO LATE.
WHO ARE YOU, HIS MOM?
WHO ARE YOU CALLING AN OLD WOMAN?
I DIDN'T SAY THAT!

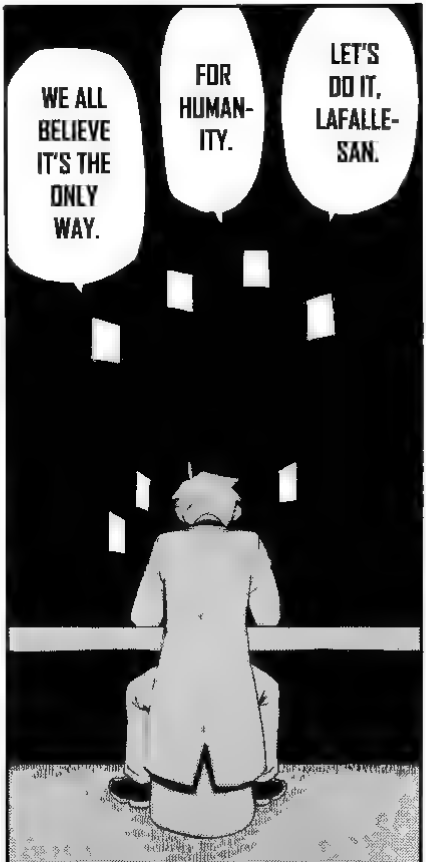
FUUTA, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
I-I'M OKAY.
IT'S NOTHING LIKE THAT.
THANKS! SEE YOU TOMORROW.

DID I...
TALIO.
UNCLE AIZEN.
RIFFLE.


DID I DO THE RIGHT THING?

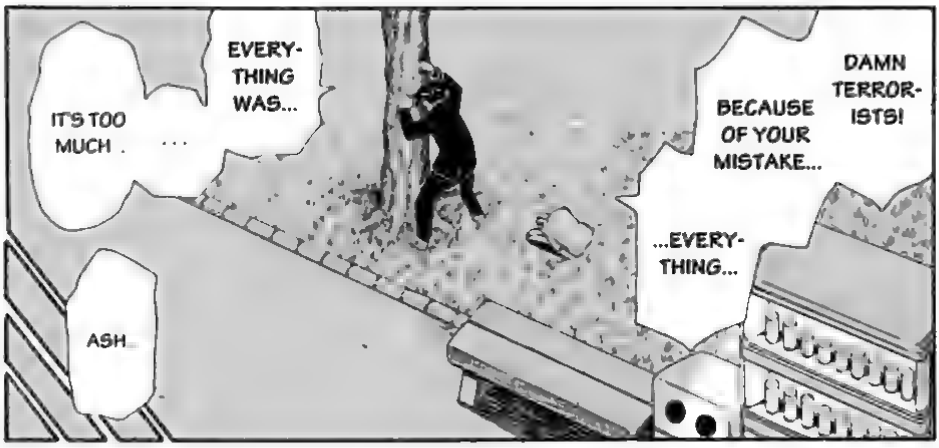
ISN'T THAT RIGHT ?!
I WAS RIGHT!
I DID THE RIGHT THING!
ABIB-SAN, KAITZ-SAN, STAUB-SAN, WORF-SAN!

WE DID IT...
...FOR HU-MAN-ITY!


LET'S DO IT, LAFALLE-SAN.
FOR HUMAN-ITY.
WE ALL BELIEVE IT'S THE ONLY WAY.

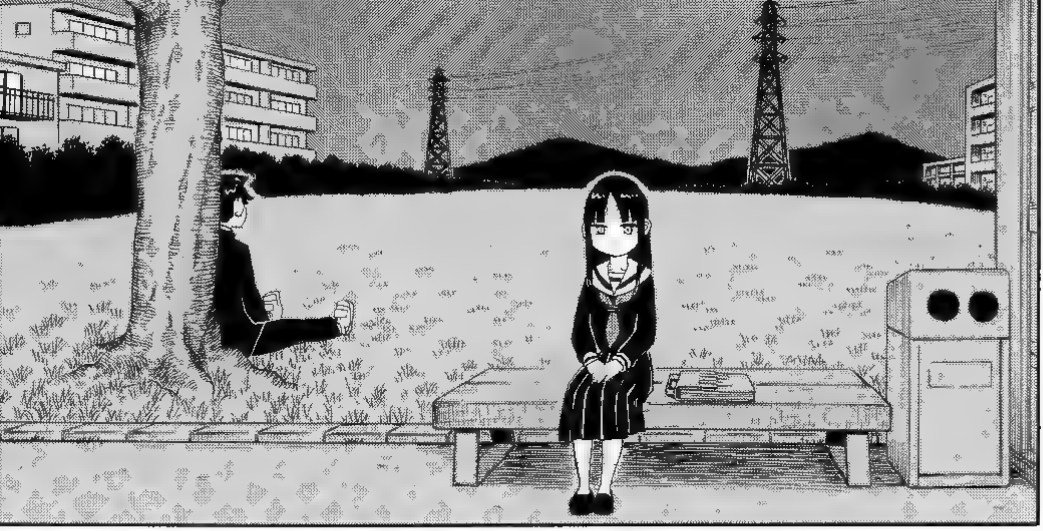
BUT... WHAT WAS THAT?!
THAT WASN'T ...

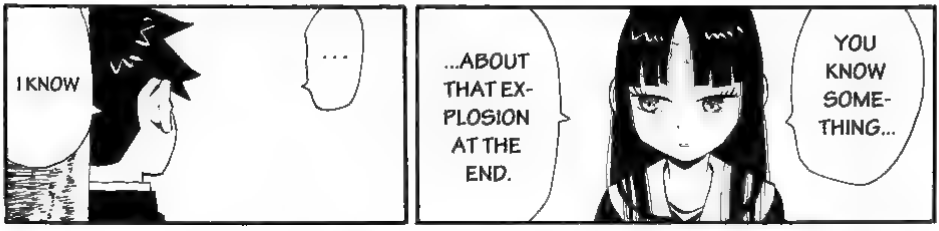
...HU-
MAN-
KIND
ENDS
?!
BONK
IS THAT
HOW...


IT'S TOO
MUCH . . .
EVERY-
THING
WAS...
DAMN
TERROR-
ISTS!
BECAUSE
OF YOUR
MISTAKE...
...EVERY-
THING...
ASH...

. . .

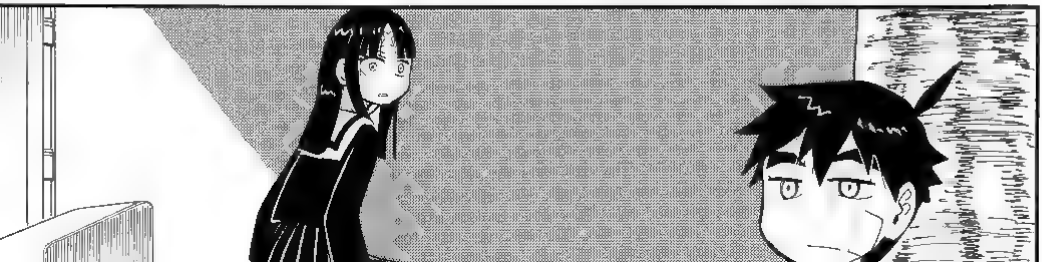
WHAT
ARE YOU
SCREAM-
ING
ABOUT?
I THOUGHT
YOU WERE
LOOKING
FOR RUNE



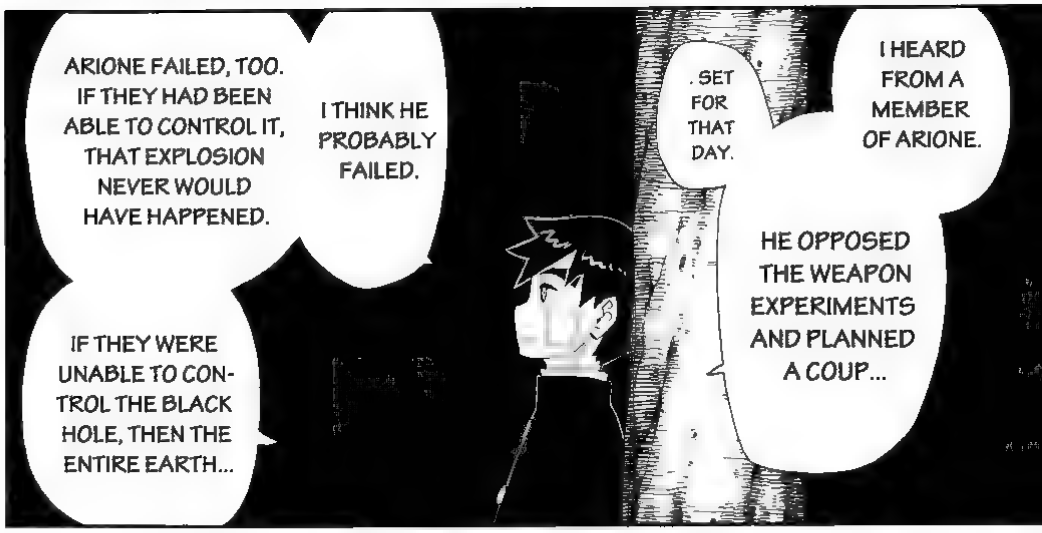

I KNOW
...
...ABOUT THAT EXPLOSION AT THE END.
YOU KNOW SOMETHING...

A BLACK HOLE WEAPON THAT ARIONE INVENTED RAN OUT OF ONTROL.
...
TELL ME.

NO, OF THE EARTH.
...OF HUMANKIND.
IT WAS THE END



...
THAT CAN'T BE...

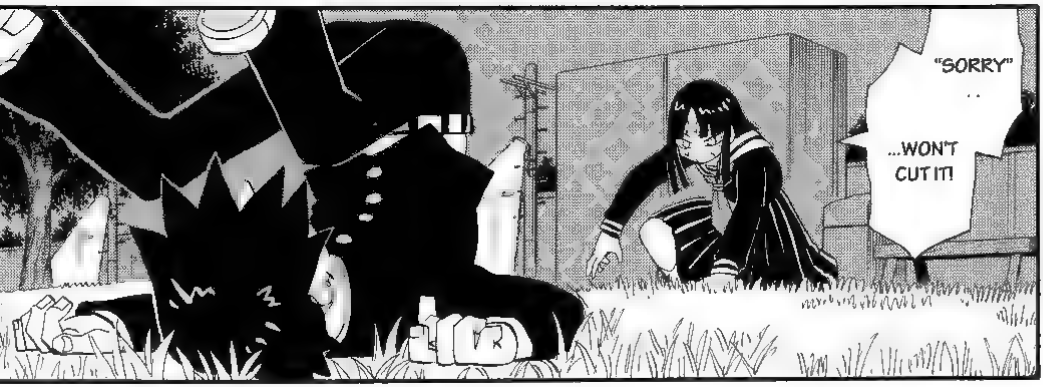

I HEARD FROM A MEMBER OF ARIONE.
. SET FOR THAT DAY.
HE OPPOSED THE WEAPON EXPERIMENTS AND PLANNED A COUP...
I THINK HE PROBABLY FAILED.
ARIONE FAILED, TOO. IF THEY HAD BEEN ABLE TO CONTROL IT, THAT EXPLOSION NEVER WOULD HAVE HAPPENED.
IF THEY WERE UNABLE TO CONTROL THE BLACK HOLE, THEN THE ENTIRE EARTH...

.. CAN'T KEEP UP
MY BRAIN...
WAIT..
WAIT.

WHAT ?!
TALKING ABOUT IT MADE ME FEEL A LITTLE BETTER.
SORRY
...

I DON'T GET IT!
WHAT ?!
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITH THAT INFO-RMATION?
SCRUB SCRUB
わしわし
I... YOU CAN'T...
YOU JERK...

SORRY.


"SORRY" . .
...WON'T CUT IT!

SO WHAT WAS THE POINT?
WHAT WAS THAT FIGHT ABOUT?!
I WORKED...
I WORKED SO HARD...

CALM DOWN.
H-HEY.
SAVED THEM?
FIGHT?
...?
IT CAN'T END LIKE THAT!
I... I SAVED THEM...
ジ
SHUT UP!
POW
キ
ッ

I FEEL RE-FRESHED.
HA...
WHAT IS THIS? THAT'S AMAZING, ISHIGAMI-SAN.

...BUT DON'T YOU THINK IT'S TOO SOON TO GIVE IN TO DESPAIR?
SORRY, ISHIGAMI-SAN. I PESSIMISTICALLY LAMENTED ABOUT THE "ENTIRE EARTH," TOO...

WE HAVE A WAY TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.
IT'S LAFALLE'S NEXT LIFE. EVEN IF IT'S IN ANOTHER ERA, WE MAY BE ABLE TO FIND SOME CLUES THERE.
GRIND
ぐぐぎぎ
WE STILL DON'T KNOW IF THAT WAS REALLY THE END OF THE WORLD.

DO YOU KNOW THE SUBJECT OF CAROL'S RESEARCH?

IT WAS TIME MACHINES.

BESIDES, THERE'S NO GUARANTEE THAT'S WHERE OUR FUTURE LEADS.

SHE HAD ALREADY CREATED PROBES.

...TIME MACHINES?

CAROL WAS...

..RESEARCHING...

THE RESULT CHANGED EVERY TIME. IN OTHER WORDS...

...LIGHTNING WOULD STRIKE DIFFERENTLY.

3rd

2nd

1st

57th

47th

ACCORDING TO THOSE, NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES SHE WATCHED THE SAME EVENT AT THE SAME TIME...

HISTORY...

...BRANCHES.

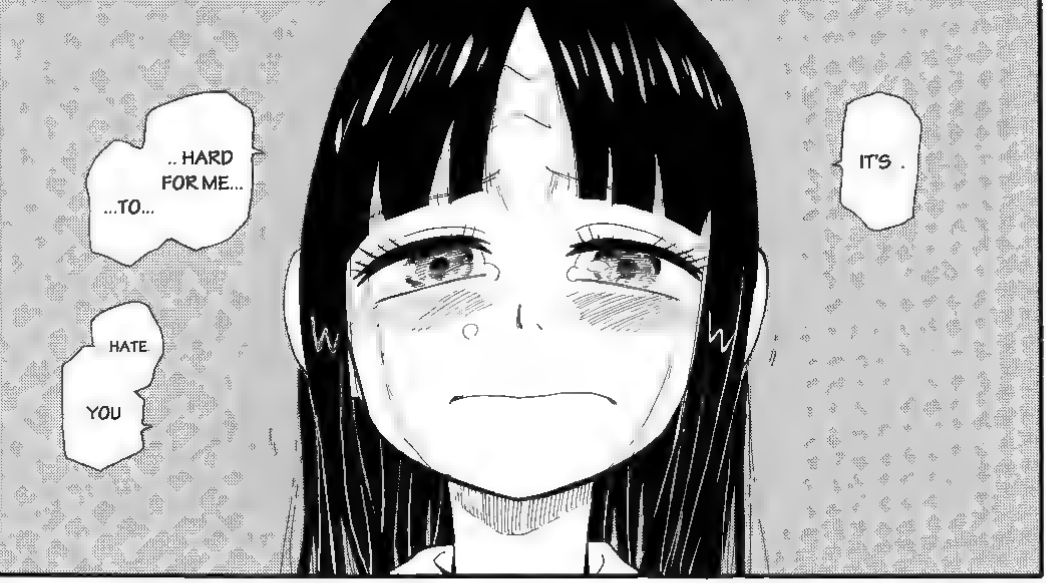
ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES EXIST.

THAT MEANS...

PARALLEL UNIVERSES EXIST?

OUR DAUGHTER TAUGHT US...
...THAT THE FUTURE AND PAST AREN'T DECIDED.
IT'S ALL RIGHT. WE DON'T HAVE TO GIVE UP HOPE YET.
...
THANKS, ISHIGAMI-SAN.
THAT PUNCH CLEARED MY HEAD.
IT LOOKS LIKE I HAD BEEN CONSUMED BY LAFALLE.
MAYBE THERE WAS SOME OF HOUTAROU'S INFLUENCE, TOO

THANKS.
BECAUSE YOU PUNCHED LAFALLE OUT OF ME...
...I WAS ABLE TO REMEMBER THE TIME MACHINES. I'M RELIEVED.
I...
...
I...
?!
ISHI-GAMI-SAN?!
YOU'RE A GOOD PERSON..
OKE-YA-KUN
I'M SORRY...
I JUST GOT UPSET AND HIT YOU.
I DIDN'T DO ANY-THING...


.. HARD FOR ME...
...TO...
HATE YOU
IT'S .

UH, ISHIGAMI-SAN?!
HUH? WHAT?!
IT'S NOT FAIR...
WHY ARE YOU ABLE TO...
CRY AND LAUGH..
SO .
..MUCH ?

I...
ISHI--!
UH--!
...DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO ANY-MORE...
I...

SINCE THE DAY YOU TRANS-FERRED TO OUR SCHOOL...
...I--!
I- I LOVE YOU!

GRAB
ガシ.

WHAT?
WHAT?
WHAT?
WHAT?
WHAT?
WHAT?
WHAT?
...

CIRCLE 31
CONFESSION 2

ISHI
I.
ISHI

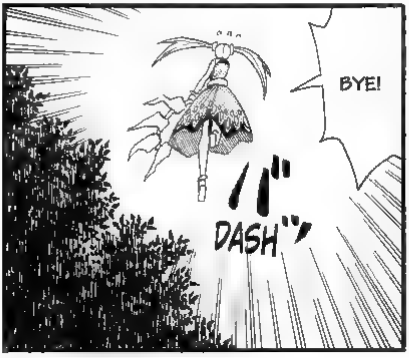
SINCE THE DAY YOU TRANS-FERRED TO OUR SCHOOL...
...I...
I...
I LOVE YOU!

WHAT?!

WHAT?
WHAT?
WHAT?
...
WHAT?
I THOUGHT THAT MIGHT BE THE CASE...
BUT IT LOOKS LIKE I SHOULDN'T HAVE WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
SO, UM...
I WENT TO LOOK FOR YOU
UMI SAID YOU WEREN'T HOME YET AND YOU'D BEEN ACTING WEIRD...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
NONO?

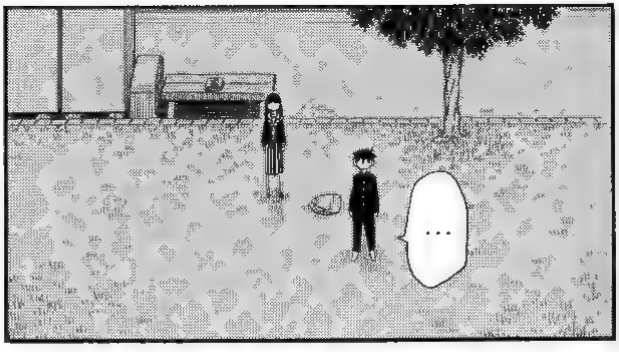
!

I HOPE YOU FIND HAPPINESS TOGETHER!!
WAIT, NON--


BYE!
DASH

UM...
ACK!
RUNE!!

UH, YEAH. OKAY.
EAST!! GO AFTER RUNE!!


...

I'M GOING HOME.
WE CAN LET EAST HANDLE RUNE.
FLIP
TURN
I'M NOT SURE, BUT..
FOLLOW UP? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU SHOULD FOLLOW UP WITH NONO
...
OH...
ARE'NT YOU GOING TO RESPOND TO MY CONFESSION?
UM...
...COULD NEVER DATE.
YOU AND I...

YOU BETTER GIVE UP.

THE NEXT DAY
THAT NIGHT RUNE DIDN'T COME HOME.
RUNE AND EAST WERE MISSING, TOO.
AFTER ALL, SHE TOLD ME, "NEVER; YOU BETTER GIVE UP."
MY CONFESSION MUST HAVE REALLY DISGUSTED HER.
I SEE. SHE'S BEDRIDDEN NOW BECAUSE SHE'S SO UPSET.
ISHIGAMI-SAN DIDN'T COME TO SCHOOL.
U-UMI...
SHE TOLD ME EVERYTHING.
WHAT'S WITH THE POSE?
WHAT'S GOING ON, UMI?
LET ME TALK TO YOU FOR A SECOND.
YOU, WITH THE EYEBROWS

WHO KNOWS?
WHAT'S GOING ON?
UMI, DON'T HURT HIM.
?
YANK
TETSU, DAIKI, I NEED TO BORROW FUUTA FOR A MINUTE.
THAT'S NOT YOUR BUSINESS.
URGH.
SO WHAT?
YOU CONFESSED YOUR FEELINGS TO KOKO?
FUUTA.
ALSO, WHY ISN'T KOKO AT SCHOOL TODAY? WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED?
SO HOW DID IT TURN OUT?
WHEW
YOU'RE JUST CURIOUS?
YOU AND KOKO ARE MY FRIENDS
I-IT IS MY BUSINESS.

WELL...
THE RE-SULT?
THE RE-SULT..

THIS ISSUE IS BETWEEN FUUTA AND KOKO!!
WE SHOULDN'T FORCE HIM TO TELL US!
DON'T!!
IT'S NOT OUR BUSI-NESS!

AFTER ALL, I KNOW
IT'S FINE. YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME EVERY-THING
SWIP
BUT YOU SAID YOU WERE CURIOUS.

YOU MAKE A GREAT COUPLE!!
I'LL SUPPORT YOUR RELATION-SHIP!!

SO HOW DID IT TURN OUT?
SHE RE-JECTED ME.
I SEE...
DASH
I HOPE YOU FIND HAPPINESS TOGETHER!!
AGAIN?
ISN'T IT BECAUSE SHE LOATHED MY AFFECTION SO MUCH SHE'S BEDRIDDEN NOW?
PFFPT
SNICKER
SNICKER
THAT'S HILARI-OUS.
DON'T LAUGH!!
BUT I WONDER WHY SHE SKIPPED SCHOOL.
DON'T TELL ME YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED.
WHAT?
ABOUT NONO.
BUT WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
IS IT TRUE?
IS...

NONO LIKES YOU.
OF COURSE IT IS. EVERYONE KNOWS.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "GO"?
なんだ マシモ
"WEIRD" IN WHAT WAY?
YEAH, IT WOULD BE.
BUT IT'D BE WEIRD FOR YOU TO GO TO NONO AFTER KOKO REJECTED YOU.
YOU DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THAT RIGHT NOW, DO YOU?
成績 ヤバい
YOUR GRADES ARE LOOKING GRIM.
WHY DON'T YOU CLEAR UP YOUR YOUTH WHILE YOU CAN?
WE'LL BE STUDYING FOR ENTRANCE EXAMS SOON.
I DIDN'T SAY THAT!!
柔道チョップ!!
JUDO CHOP!!
WHUD
DON'T CALL ME AN OLD LADY!!
...MY MOM?!
WHO ARE YOU...
...DO YOU LIKE ANYONE?
BY THE WAY...
I DON'T KNOW.
GENERALLY SPEAKING.
WHAT KIND OF MOTHER INTERFERES IN HER SON'S ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS?

hi
WELL, I GUESS IT CAN'T HURT...
HMM.
IF YOU TELL ANY-ONE...
...I'LL CHOKE YOU OUT.
SQUEEZE YOU LIKE THIS!
IT'S A SECRET.
WHAT?!
I'M GLAD YOU BECAME GOOD FRIENDS WITH LIHANERRA
.I FELT AS THOUGH FLORS WAS LAUGHING INSIDE ME
WHEN I LOOKED AT THE SKY.

I FEEL LAFALLE NEVER REPAID THE DEBT HE OWED CAROL.
WHAT ABOUT NONO?
..GRAND-PA FLORS.
LAFALLE AND RIFFLE WERE GOOD FRIENDS, TOO...
WAS LAFALLE ABLE TO REPAY HIS DEBT IN HIS NEXT LIFE?
HIS DEBT TO AKARI
THAT NIGHT, I HAD A DREAM

HEE HEE. ISN'T IT AMAZING?
WHAT IS THIS?
I'M BACK...?
OH, I'M SORRY
RUNE?!
THE CIRCLE IS, UM...
GIVE ME BACK MY CIRCLE.
WELL, WHAT-EVER...
MY MASTER THINKS SOME TERRIFYING THINGS.
THAT'S NOT ALL...
I PROMISE I'LL WAIT ABOUT TEN DAYS TO WATCH MY NEXT LIFE
YOU WERE WORRIED THAT I WAS SEEING TOO MANY PAST LIVES IN RAPID SUCCESSION, RIGHT?

IT'S FORTUNA, ISN'T IT?
...
BUT I'M NOT THINKING ANYTHING.
?

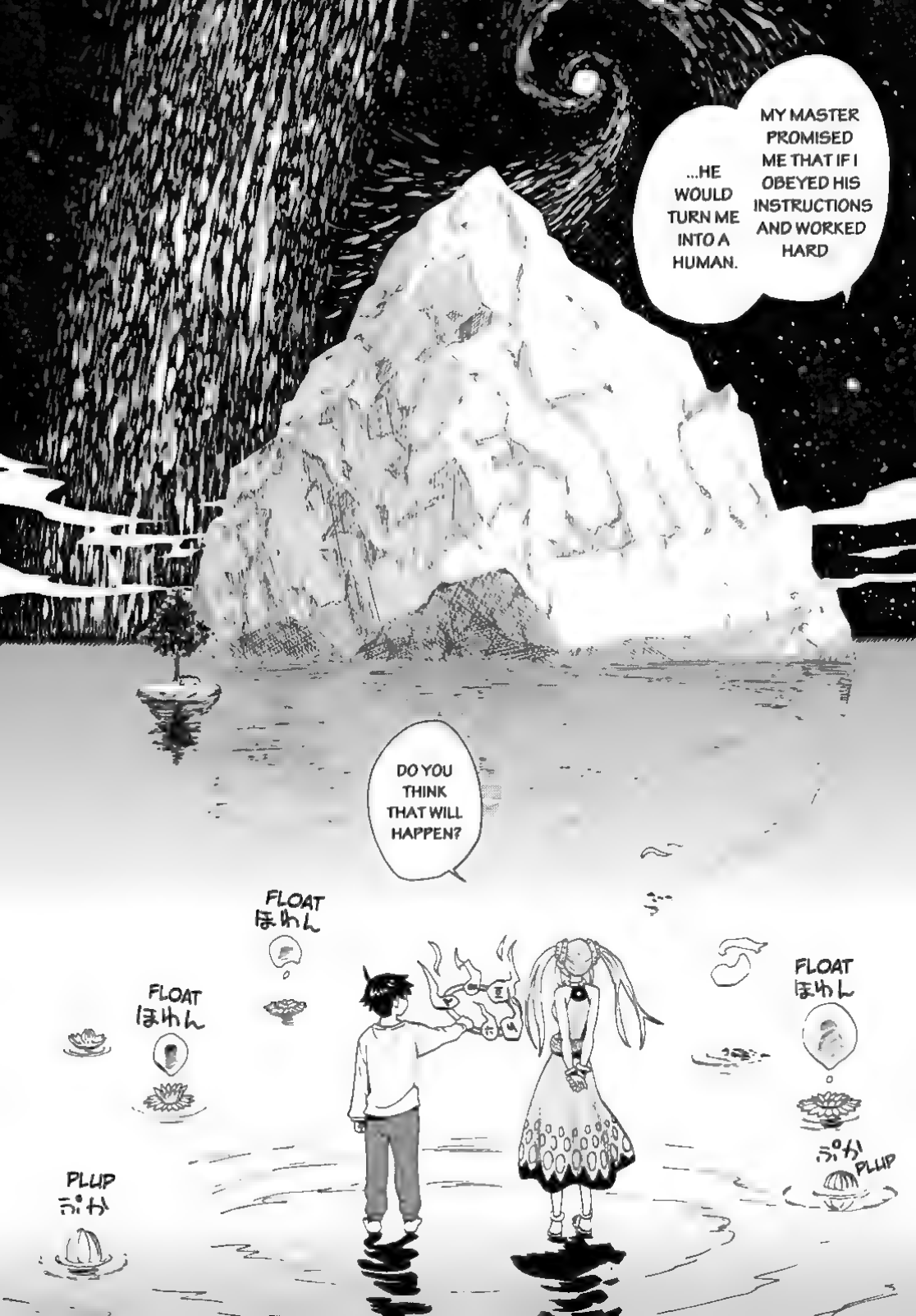
I CAN'T TELL YOU I'M SORRY..
UM, WHY DON'T YOU STOP WATCHING YOUR PAST LIVES?
HE'S ALREADY DEAD. WHAT IS HE PLANNING?
YOU'RE STARTING TO SOUND LIKE EAST.

YOU MAKE LOTS OF GRIM AND SAD EXPRESSIONS.
BUT MASTER, EVERY TIME YOU SEE A PAST LIFE, YOU WAKE UP WITH A STRANGE EXPRESSION ON YOUR FACE

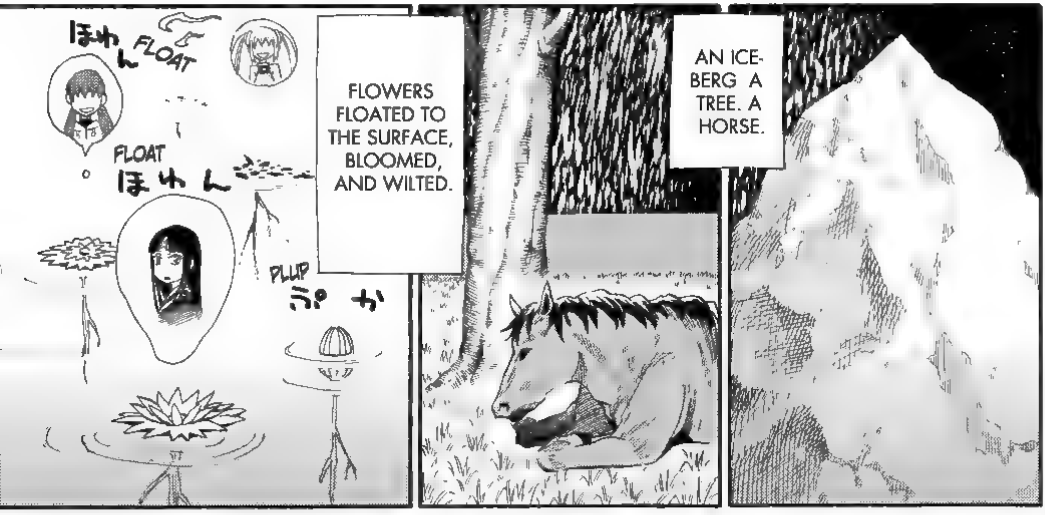
...MORE OFTEN.
WHIM-PER
MASTER, YOU SHOULD SMILE AND LAUGH...
SNIF-FLE

I'VE SEEN A LOT OF CRYING GIRLS LATELY.
YOU ALWAYS MAKE GIRLS CRY
NO, I DON'T!
HA HA HA!
I'M KIDDING, MASTER.
UH. .
I-IN ANY CASE, WHATEVER FORTUNA'S THINKING, I WONDER WHAT ISHIGAMI-SAN INTENDS TO DO?
I'M GOING TO SEE MY PAST LIVES.
I ONLY HAVE A FEW LEFT. I CAN'T STOP NOW.

I SEE.
LEAVE TIME BETWEEN YOUR VIEWINGS
GLEAM
HERE I'LL GIVE THIS BACK TO YOU.
I'M AN ARTIFICIAL SPIRIT HE CREATED.
EITHER WAY, I CAN'T DISOBEY MY MASTER WHEN HE IS SERIOUS

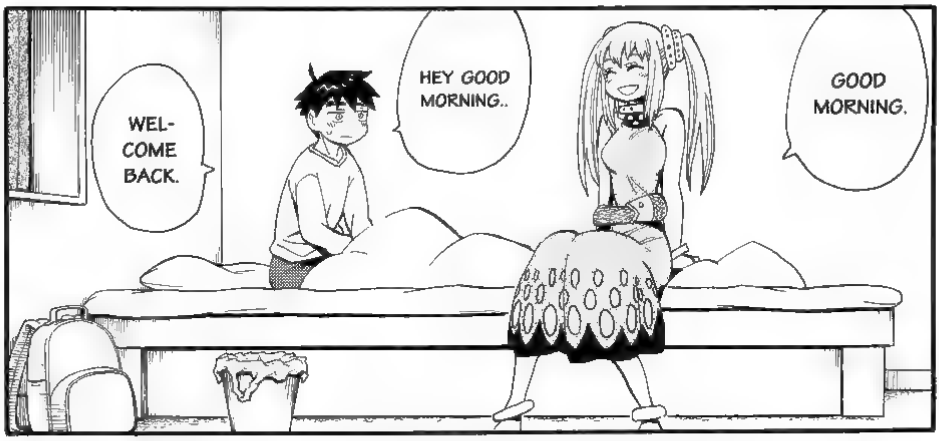

MY MASTER PROMISED ME THAT IF I OBEYED HIS INSTRUCTIONS AND WORKED HARD
...HE WOULD TURN ME INTO A HUMAN.
DO YOU THINK THAT WILL HAPPEN?
FLOAT ほわん
FLOAT ほわん
FLOAT ほわん
PLUP ぷか
ぷか PLUP

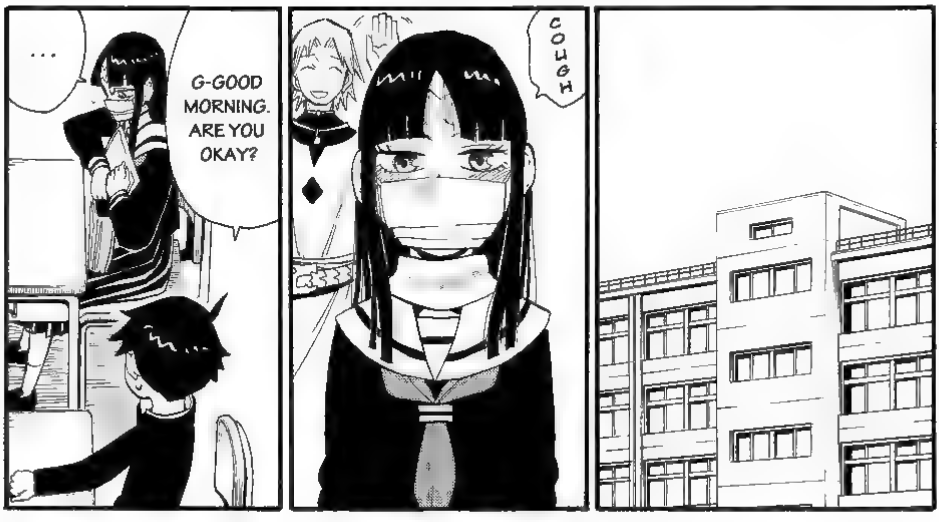
HEE HEE.
REALLY?
AT SOME POINT, THE SCENERY CHANGED
I THINK YOU'RE PLENTY HUMAN ALREADY.


ほわん FLOAT
FLOAT ほわん
FLOWERS FLOATED TO THE SURFACE, BLOOMED, AND WILTED.
PLUP ぷか
AN ICE-BERG A TREE. A HORSE.

HER COLD ISN'T SERIOUS, SO SHE SHOULD PROBABLY BE AT SCHOOL TOMORROW.
I WAS KEEPING HER COMPANY.
KOKO-CHAN CAUGHT A COLD FROM THINKING TOO LONG IN THE BATHTUB
KOKO-CHAN'S HOUSE.
IT'S MY WORLD.
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN THE PAST COUPLE DAYS?
ほわん FLOAT
I SEE.
風邪か IT'S A COLD.

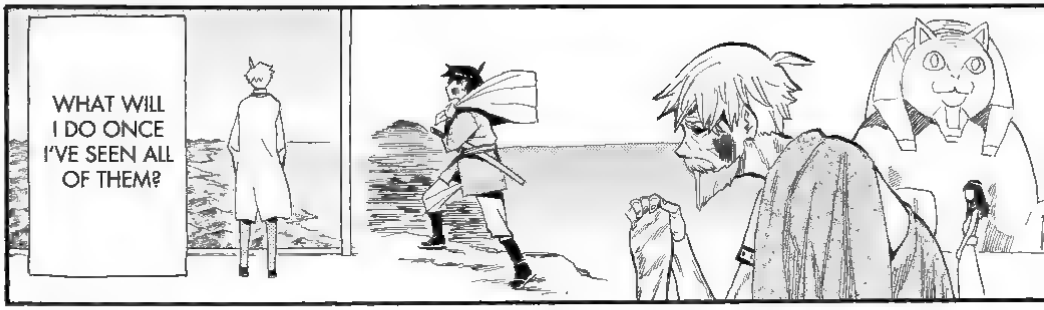
FOR SOME REASON, THE VAPORS EXPELLED FROM THE FLOWERS CONTAINED GIRLS' FACES.
I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE MYSELF.
FLOAT
ほわん
FLOAT
ほわん
PLUP
ぷか
FLOAT
ほわん
PLUP
ぷか

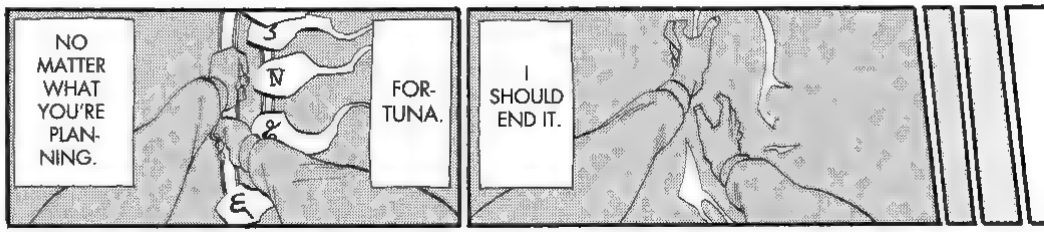

WEL-COME BACK.
HEY GOOD MORNING..
GOOD MORNING.


...
G-GOOD MORNING. ARE YOU OKAY?
COUGH

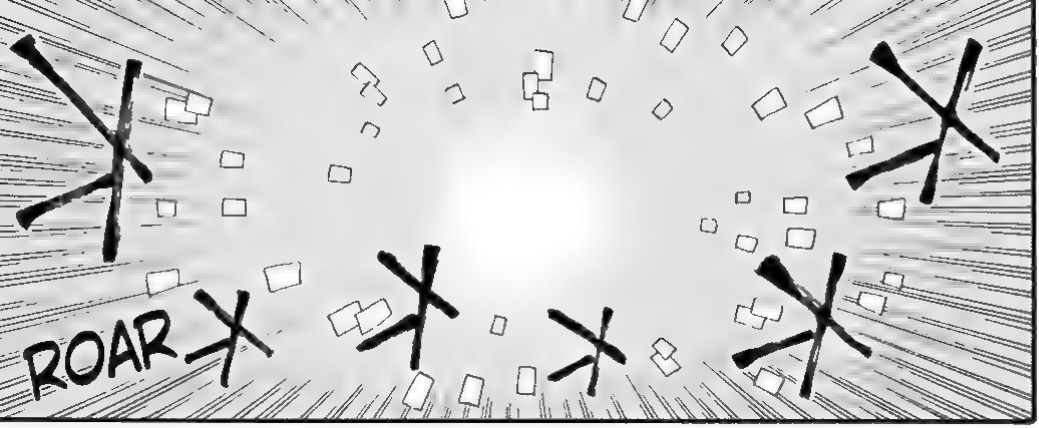
1. CHAL-LENGE
I CHAL-LENGE YOU TO A DUEL.
...
PAFF
ARE YOU OKAY?
KOKO-CHAN, GOOD MORN-ING
I'M FINE...
GOOD-- COUGH
BEFORE THEN, YOU MUST SEE THE REMAINING LIVES, NUMBER SEVEN AND NUMBER ONE.
2. THE NIGHT OF THE SECOND FRIDAY OF THE NEXT MONTH. WE WILL MEET IN THE PARK FOR A BATTLE TO THE DEATH.
...ON THE FINAL DAY.
ISHI-GAMI KOU-KO
BUT I WILL TELL YOU HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOU...
3. NO MATTER HOW GOOD A PERSON YOU ARE, IT CANNOT CHANGE THE FACT THAT I MUST KILL YOU.
TWO MORE.

TWO MORE.
THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY THAT BEGAN AS SUMMER CAME TO A CLOSE WILL END SOON.


WHAT WILL I DO ONCE I'VE SEEN ALL OF THEM?


NO MATTER WHAT YOU'RE PLAN-NING.
FOR-TUNA.
I SHOULD END IT.

I WILL!!
...I WILL PUT AN END TO THIS DESTINY.

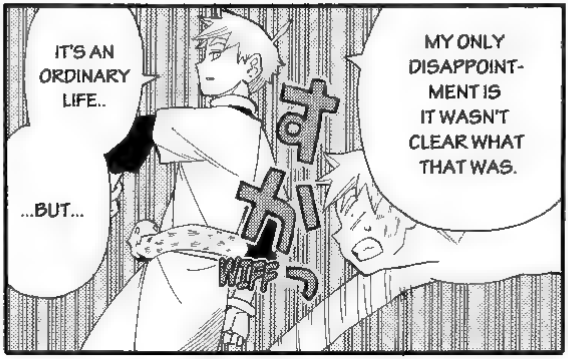

ROAR

IT'S UN-REMARKABLE, UNEVENTFUL, AND WITHOUT CONFLICT.
YOUR NEXT PAST LIFE IS PRETTY DULL.

UNFOR-TUNATELY, I HAVE SOME BAD NEWS FOR YOU
HEY LAFALLE'S LIFE WAS IN-TERESTING, WASN'T IT?

ALTHOUGH IT MAY BE MORE INTERESTING GIVEN THE ORDER IN WHICH YOU'VE VIEWED YOUR LIVES.
I'M ALMOST JEALOUS.
AFTER ALL, THE NEXT PLACE YOU'RE HEADED
DON'T START WITH A SPOILER!
HEY!

YOU'LL CLEARLY EXPERIENCE ANOTHER WORLD LIKE YOU NEVER HAVE BEFORE.
...IS ONLY A SLIGHT SHIFT IN POSSIBILITY FROM YOUR COORDINATES IN SPACE-TIME.


IT'S AN ORDINARY LIFE..
...BUT...
すかっ
WIPE
MY ONLY DISAPPOINT-MENT IS IT WASN'T CLEAR WHAT THAT WAS.

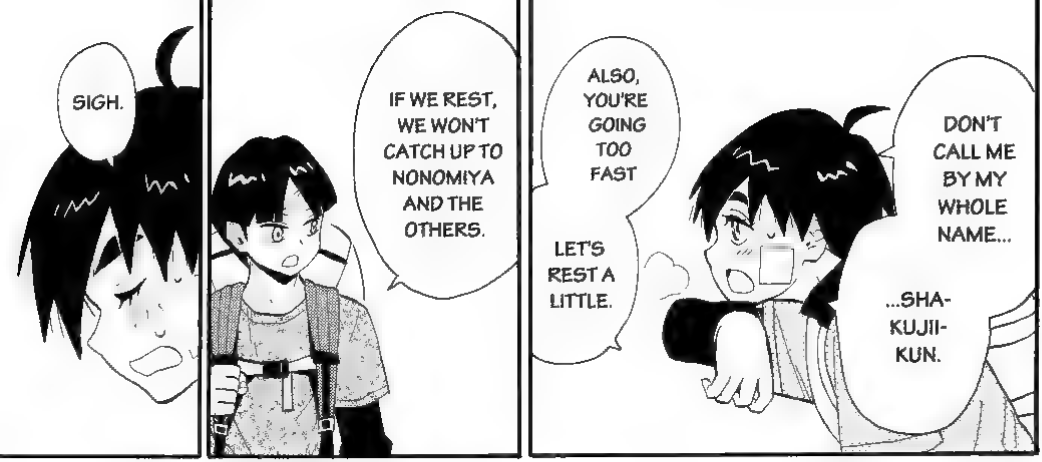
I DON'T UNDER-STAND!
ANO-THER WORLD ?!
REACH

...NEXT, YOU'LL BE A WOMAN.

OH... I FORGOT TO ASK HIM ABOUT THE FU-TURE DESTRUC-TION OF THE WORLD...
WHY DID HE COME SPEAK TO ME THIS TIME...?
SEE YA.
A...
...WO-MAN?!

CIRCLE 32
FUUKO

WHEW.
OKEYA FUUKO!
HURRY UP OR WE'LL GET SEPARATED AGAIN!
OKE-YA!

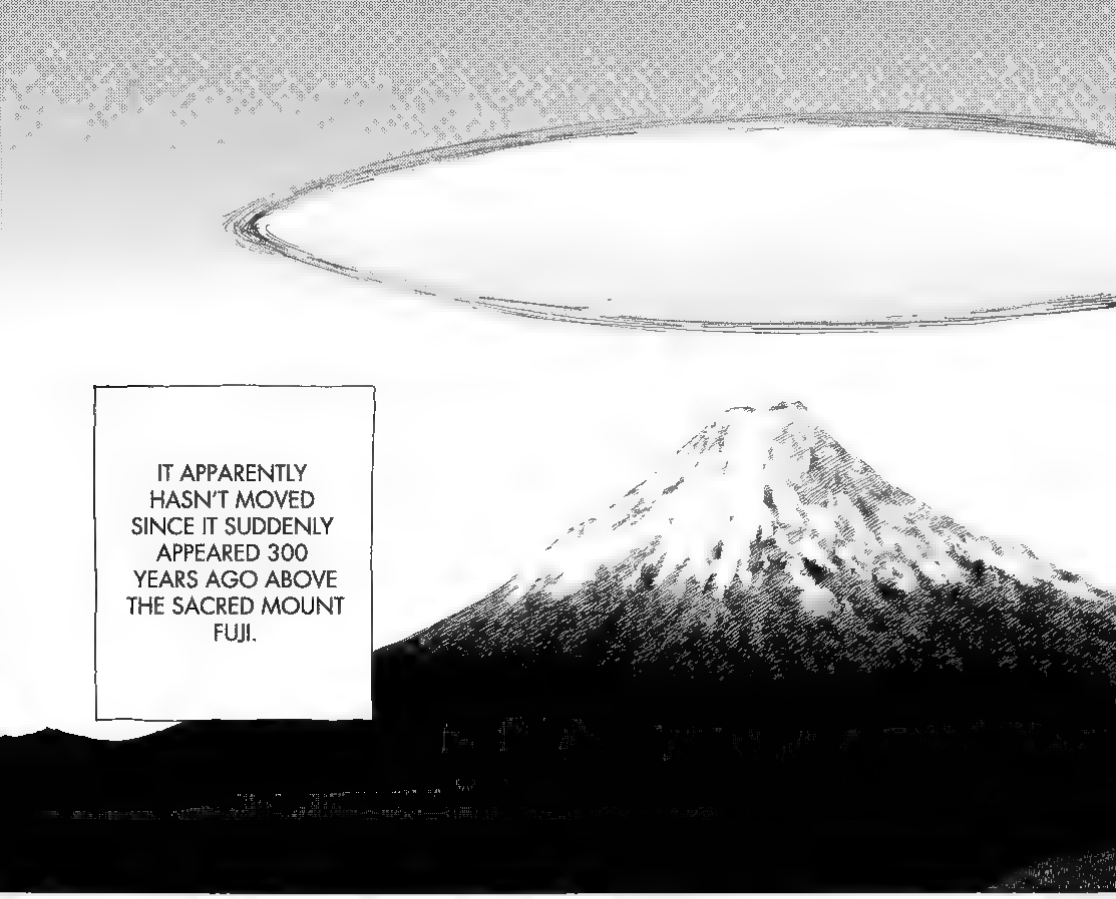

SIGH.
IF WE REST, WE WON'T CATCH UP TO NONOMIYA AND THE OTHERS.
ALSO, YOU'RE GOING TOO FAST
LET'S REST A LITTLE.
DON'T CALL ME BY MY WHOLE NAME...
...SHA-KUJII-KUN.

DO YOU KNOW A LOT ABOUT MOUNTAINS?
NOTH-ING.
NOT AT ALL.
YOU IDIOT.
IF OUR GROUP GETS ANY MORE SEPARATED, IT'LL BE A DIS-ASTER.
YOU GO ON AHEAD, THEN.
THERE'S ONLY ONE PATH. EVEN IF WE GET SEPA-RATED...

PULL
IN ANY CASE, WALK.
SIGH

...TO INVES-TIGATE WHAT "THAT" WAS.
WE CAME TO THE MOUN-TAINS...

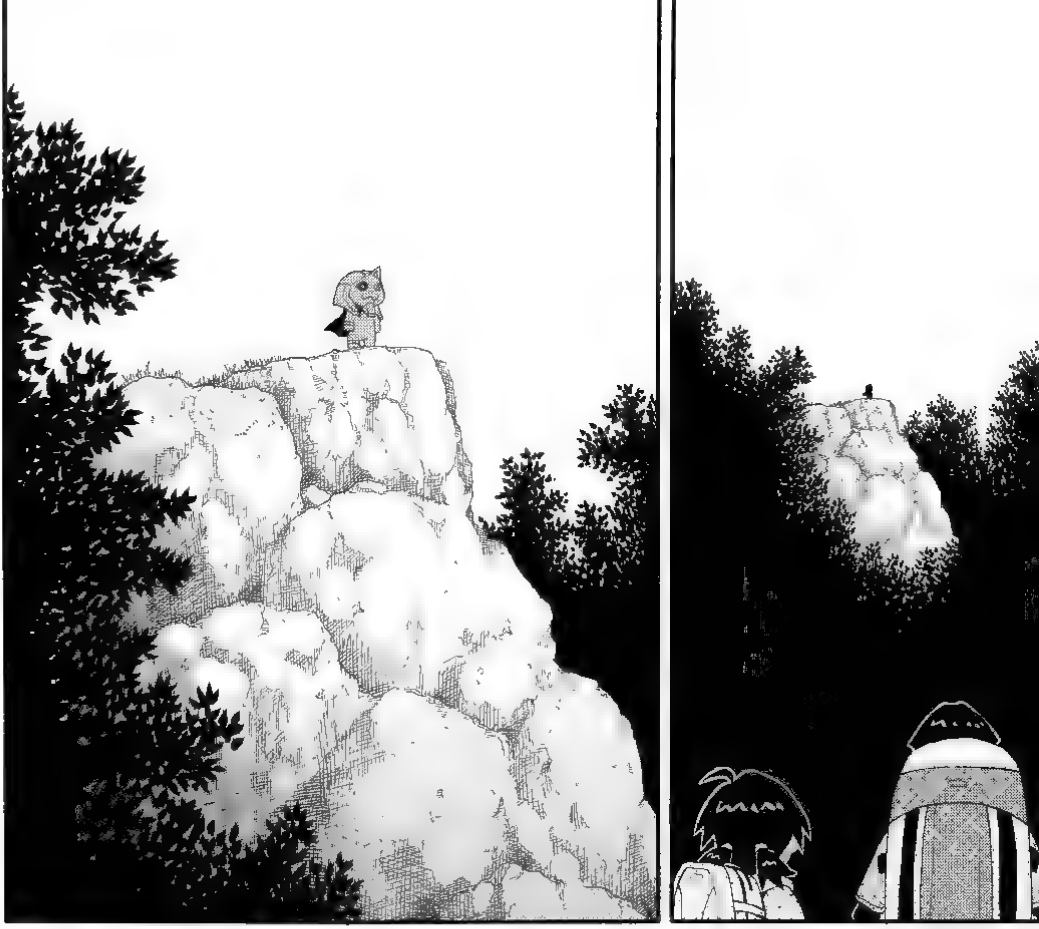
THE 91ST YEAR OF THE SYOU-WA ERA.
EVEN THOUGH WE'VE ENTERED A SCIENTIFIC ERA IN WHICH COMPUTER NETWORKS COVER THE GLOBE, WE STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS.
THIS MASSIVE FLOATING STATIC OBJECT COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE "FUJI ROOF."
...BUT WE'RE STAVING OFF BOREDOM OVER OUR SUMMER BREAK BY SOLVING THE MYSTERIES OF THE FUJI ROOF!
WHEW
IT'S BECOME SUCH A NORMAL PART OF THE SCENERY THAT HARDLY ANYONE EXPRESSES ANY INTEREST IN IT...


IT APPARENTLY HASN'T MOVED SINCE IT SUDDENLY APPEARED 300 YEARS AGO ABOVE THE SACRED MOUNT FUJI.

CHAPTER 7
"FUUKO"

I'M SURE THEY'RE NOT TRYING TO GET AWAY FROM US.
I WISH I COULD TELL YOU IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE SLOW, BUT IT IS ODD.
WHY..
WHY HAVEN'T WE CAUGHT UP TO THE OTHERS YET?
I HEARD NONOMIYA CONFESSED TO YOU.
PFFFT!
GLUG
GLUG
GLUG
STEP
I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT.
WE SHOULD GET GOING.
YOU HAVEN'T RESPONDED YET, RIGHT? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?!
COUGH
TH-THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!

IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T LIKE NON...
COME TO THINK OF IT, PEOPLE CALL HIM "NON," RIGHT?
I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS, EITHER.
..BUT I'M AFRAID OF RUINING AN OLD FRIENDSHIP.
POUND, HUH.
DON'T CALL ME A NERD.
HAVE YOU EVER FELT YOUR HEART POUND?
I'M NOT SURPRISED THAT A NERD LIKE YOU DOESN'T UNDERSTAND ROMANCE.
HEY!
YES?!
OKE-YA!
LOOK.
IT WAS POUNDING EARLIER.



WHIRRR
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK

FSSH

LET'S GO CHECK IT OUT.
IT... DISAP-PEARED...

I'VE SEEN RUMORS ABOUT HIM ONLINE.
.SHOULDN'T WE STAY ON THE TRAIL?
WHAT? BUT...

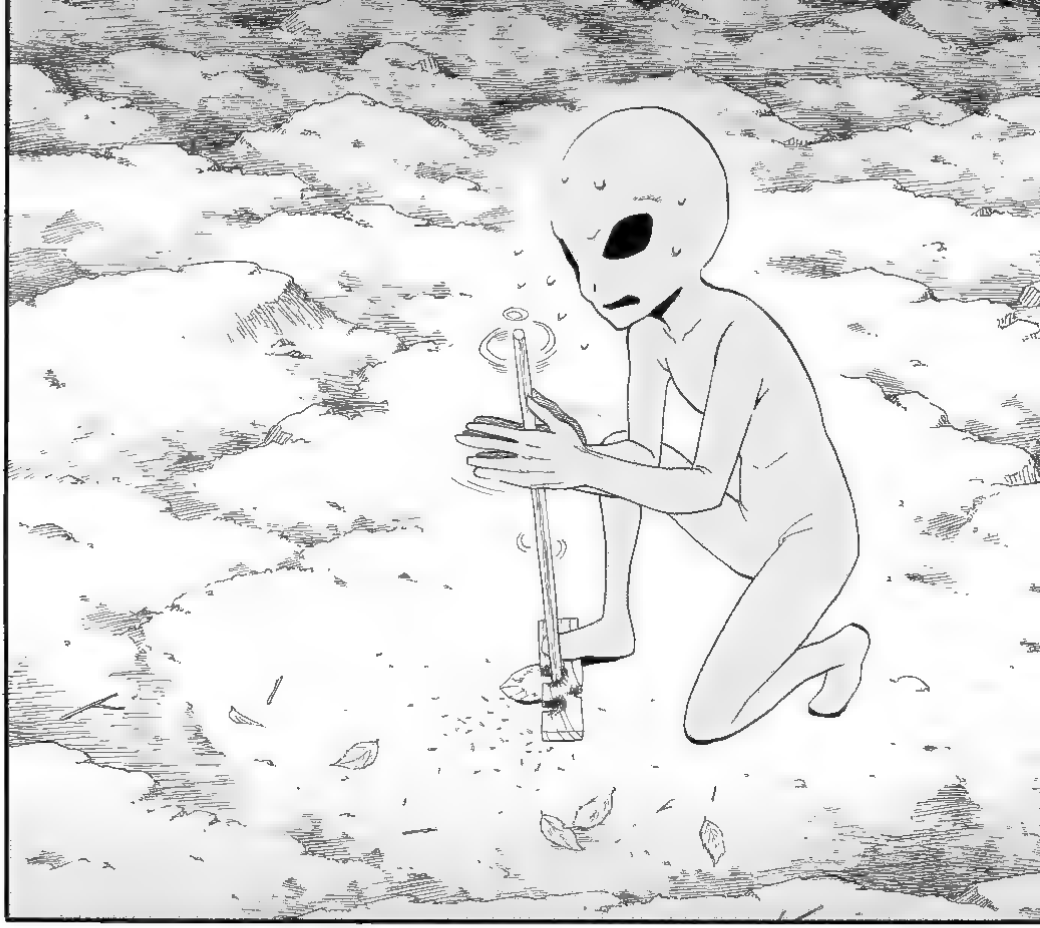
WE'RE GOING TO SOLVE THIS, RIGHT?
LET'S GO.
BUT HE MAY HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE FUJI ROOF.
WHO KNOWS?
STEP
THEN HE LOOKED UP AT THE SKY AND DISAP-PEARED.
WHY WOULD HE DO THAT?
SOMEONE SAW HIM DEEP IN THE MOUNTAINS OF SOME COUNTRY, STANDING JUST LIKE THAT.

HMPH
I DON'T MIND HELPING YOU A LITTLE BIT.
WELL, EVERYONE BESIDES YOU JUST CAME TO ENJOY CAMPING.
HEADING INTO THE UNKNOWN IS AN ADVENTURE.
MY HEART WAS POUNDING.
IT WAS AN ADVENTURE.
PSYCHOLOGY
ARCHAEOLOGY
PHYSICS
THERE ARE MANY THINGS I WANT TO KNOW.
I WANT TO BECOME SMARTER.
...I WANT TO KNOW MORE
WHATEVER ACADEMIC FIELD I CHOOSE TO PURSUE IN THE FUTURE ..

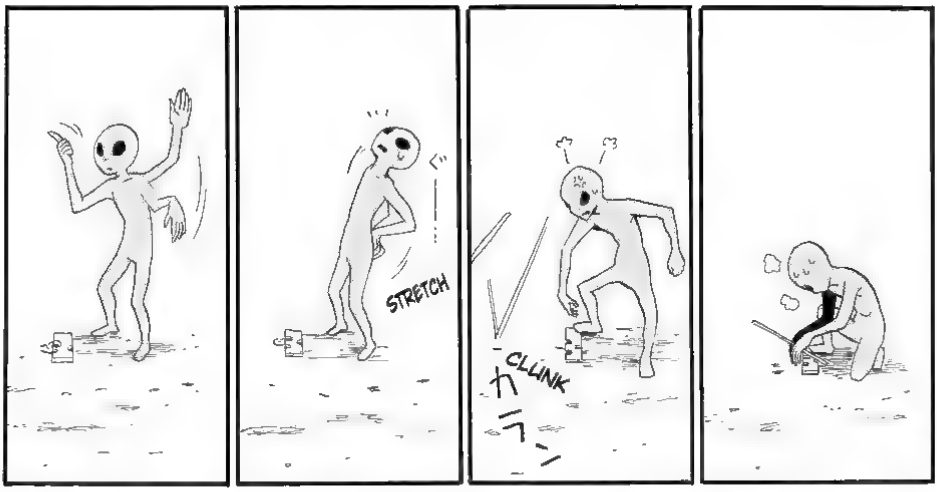
EVERY UN-
KNOWN
WILL BE
KNOWN!
I DON'T
CARE IF IT
MAKES ME
A NERD!
I HAVE TO
KNOW!
LET'S GO!
THE UN-
KNOWN
IS THERE!

...
?

...
LOOK
CLOSELY.
AT THE
PERSON.
THERE'S
A PER-
SON
?
IT'S A
CAVE,
AND
...?
WHAT...
WHAT'S
WRONG?
THERE..
IN
FRONT
OF US



GULP


STRETCH
CLLINK

IT TOLD US TO COME HERE.
STEP
DO YOU WANT TO CHECK IT OUT...?
I-IT JUST... WAVED AT US, DIDN'T IT?
IT MUST BE A COS-TUME... RIGHT?
IT'S AN E-EXTRA-TERR... NO . !!

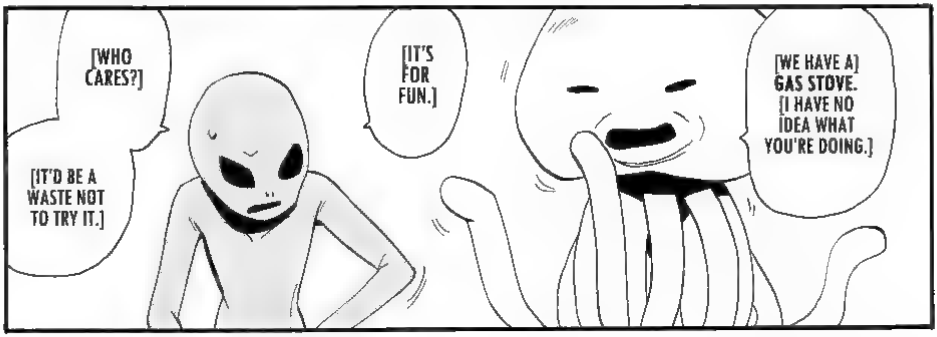
WHAT IS THAT?

SERI-OUSLY?
PARDON THE INTRU-SION.

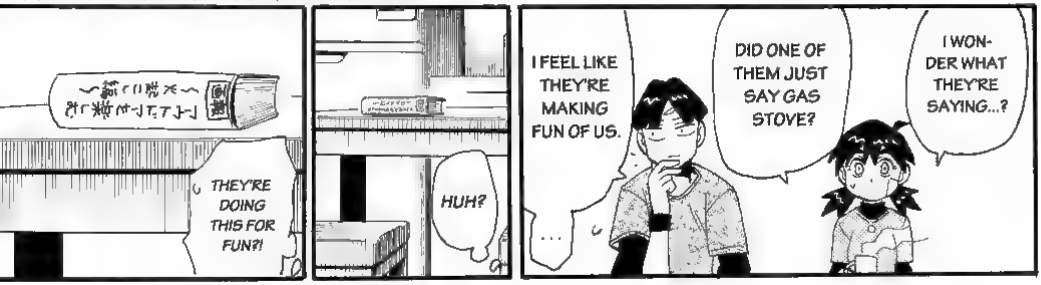
[THE SPACE-TIME PROBE ARRIVED.]
[DID YOU SEE IT?]
[OH, DO YOU WANT] COFFEE?
[YEAH. THESE TWO WERE DRAWN TO IT.]
[OH, JUST] COFFEE [FOR THESE TWO.]

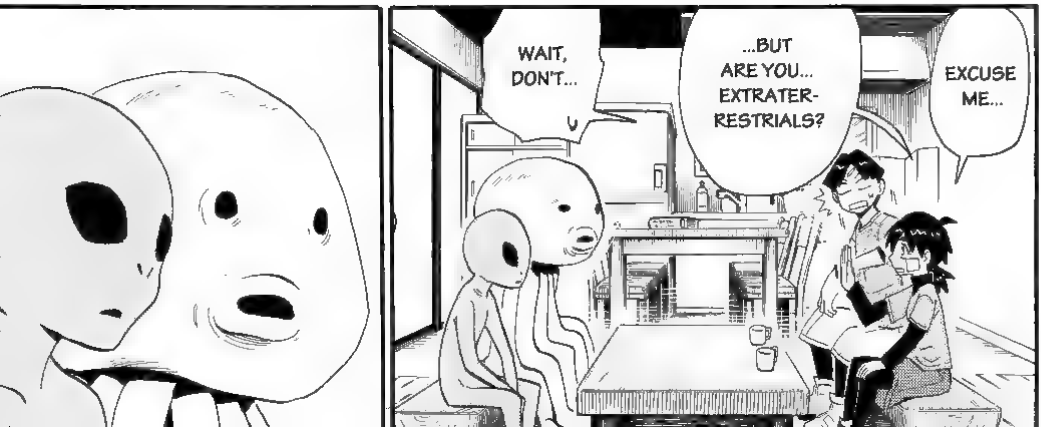
THERE'S ANOTHER ONE.
JUST ONE?
A GAS STOVE..?
WAIT, A GAS STOVE?
DID THEY JUST SAY COFFEE?
CLINK
TICK TICK TICK
PWOOSH
CLICK

THANKS.
AN OCTO-PUS...
CLINK
CLINK
ANOTHER GESTURE.
MAYBE IT WANTS US TO SIT OVER THERE?



BOOK. "ENJOYING THE OUTDOORS, STARTING A FIRE"


THEY'RE DOING THIS FOR FUN?!
HUH?
I FEEL LIKE THEY'RE MAKING FUN OF US.
DID ONE OF THEM JUST SAY GAS STOVE?
I WONDER WHAT THEY'RE SAYING...?

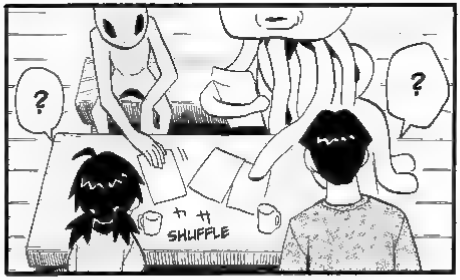


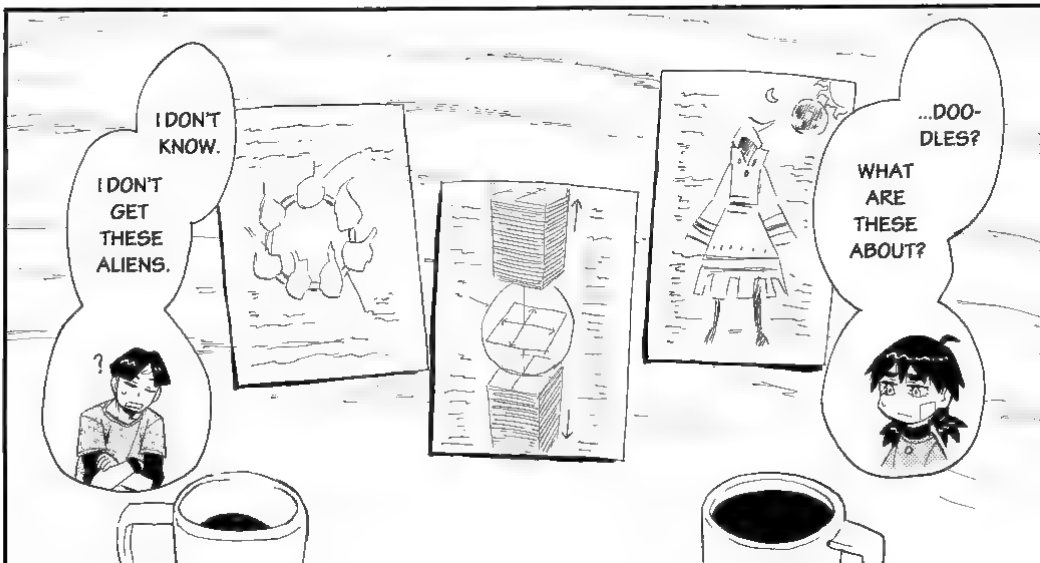
DON'T BE SO RUDE!
THEY'RE LAUGHING?!

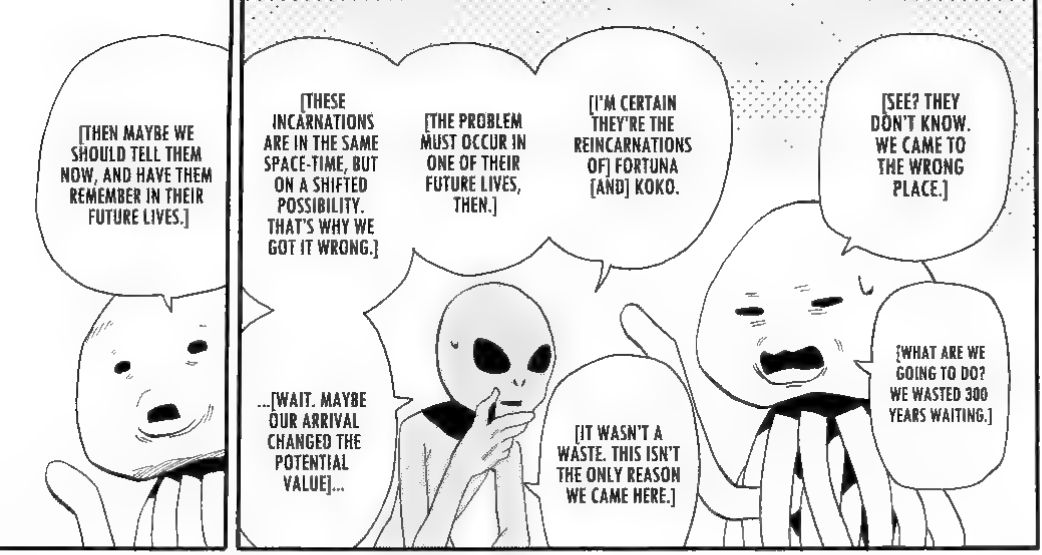
ER. I DUNNO.
WAS IT RUDE?
RUSTLE RUSTLE

GUFFAW
[YOU'RE A GENIUS!]
[SEE? THEY GOT IT! I KNEW WE CHOSE THE RIGHT OUTFITS!]
[THE EARTHLINGS CAME UP WITH THESE DESIGNS, TOO.]
[I GUESS THAT'S WHY THESE WORKED.]
[I WONDER WHAT THEY'D THINK IF THEY SAW WHAT WE REALLY LOOK LIKE.]

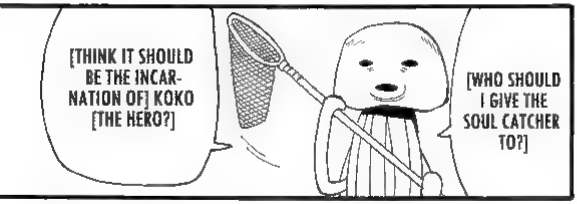
DO THEY WANT US TO LOOK AT THEM?
..WHAT?

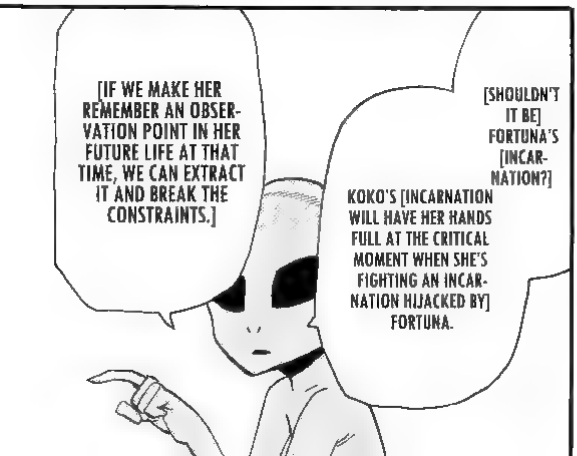

?
?
SHUFFLE

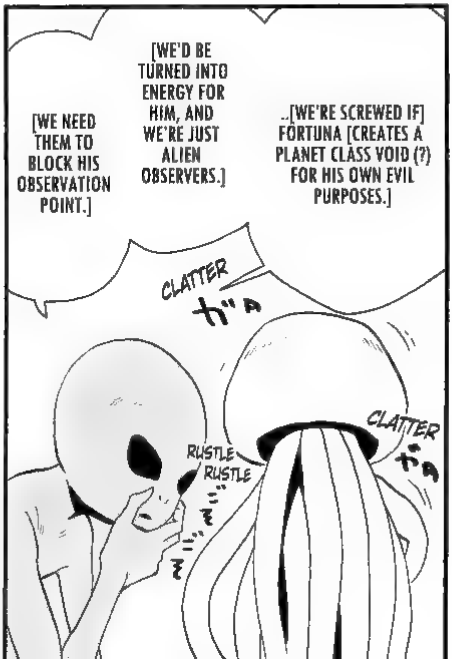

I DON'T KNOW.
I DON'T GET THESE ALIENS.
?
...DOODLES?
WHAT ARE THESE ABOUT?

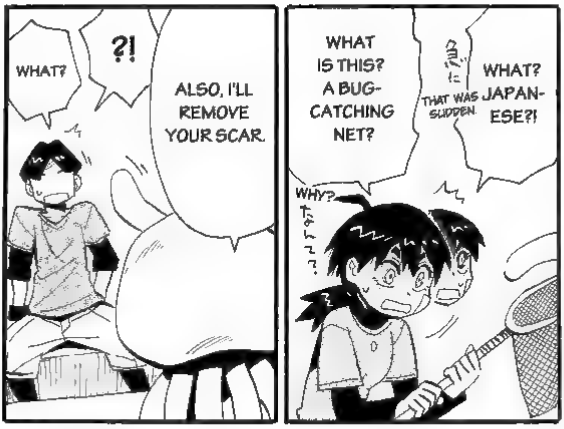

[THEN MAYBE WE SHOULD TELL THEM NOW, AND HAVE THEM REMEMBER IN THEIR FUTURE LIVES.]
[THESE INCARNATIONS ARE IN THE SAME SPACE-TIME, BUT ON A SHIFTED POSSIBILITY. THAT'S WHY WE GOT IT WRONG.]
[THE PROBLEM MUST OCCUR IN ONE OF THEIR FUTURE LIVES, THEN.]
[I'M CERTAIN THEY'RE THE REINCARNATIONS OF] FORTUNA [AND] KOKO.
[SEE? THEY DON'T KNOW. WE CAME TO THE WRONG PLACE.]
...[WAIT. MAYBE OUR ARRIVAL CHANGED THE POTENTIAL VALUE]...
[IT WASN'T A WASTE. THIS ISN'T THE ONLY REASON WE CAME HERE.]
[WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO? WE WASTED 300 YEARS WAITING.]

[WE'LL GIVE THEM THIS SOUL CATCHER DISGUISED AS A BUG-CATCHING NET.]
[LET'S GO WITH THAT, THEN.]
...FORTUNA [IS ONE RIDICULOUS GUY.]
FORTUNA [COULD BE OBSERVING THIS LIFE RIGHT NOW.]
[SURE, BUT LET'S MAKE THEM FORGET UNTIL THE RIGHT TIME IN THEIR FUTURE LIVES.]
[OKAY.]


[THINK IT SHOULD BE THE INCAR-NATION OF] KOKO [THE HERO?]
[WHO SHOULD I GIVE THE SOUL CATCHER TO?]


[IF WE MAKE HER REMEMBER AN OBSER-VATION POINT IN HER FUTURE LIFE AT THAT TIME, WE CAN EXTRACT IT AND BREAK THE CONSTRAINTS.]
[SHOULDN'T IT BE] FORTUNA'S [INCAR-NATION?]
KOKO'S [INCARNATION WILL HAVE HER HANDS FULL AT THE CRITICAL MOMENT WHEN SHE'S FIGHTING AN INCAR-NATION HIJACKED BY] FORTUNA.


[WE NEED THEM TO BLOCK HIS OBSERVATION POINT.]
[WE'D BE TURNED INTO ENERGY FOR HIM, AND WE'RE JUST ALIEN OBSERVERS.]
..[WE'RE SCREWED IF] FORTUNA [CREATES A PLANET CLASS VOID (?) FOR HIS OWN EVIL PURPOSES.]
CLATTER
CLATTER
RUSTLE RUSTLE


WHAT?
?!
ALSO, I'LL REMOVE YOUR SCAR.
WHAT IS THIS? A BUG-CATCHING NET?
THAT WAS SUDDEN.
WHAT? JAPANESE?!
WHY?

...A GIFT.
IT'S, UM. .
YOU CAN HAVE THIS.

HUH?
WHAT?
SPLAT
SPLURCH
YOU DON'T HAVE TO REMEMBER THIS TIME.
YOU PROBABLY GOT IT IN AN ACCIDENT, BUT IT MUST MAKE YOU NEARLY REMEMBER KOKO EVERY TIME YOU LOOK IN A MIRROR.

I'LL TAKE YOU TO YOUR FRIENDS.
HUMMM
DON'T WORRY.

I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU FORGET ABOUT US FOR NOW.
LOOK THIS WAY, YOU TWO.
HUMMM

SWISH

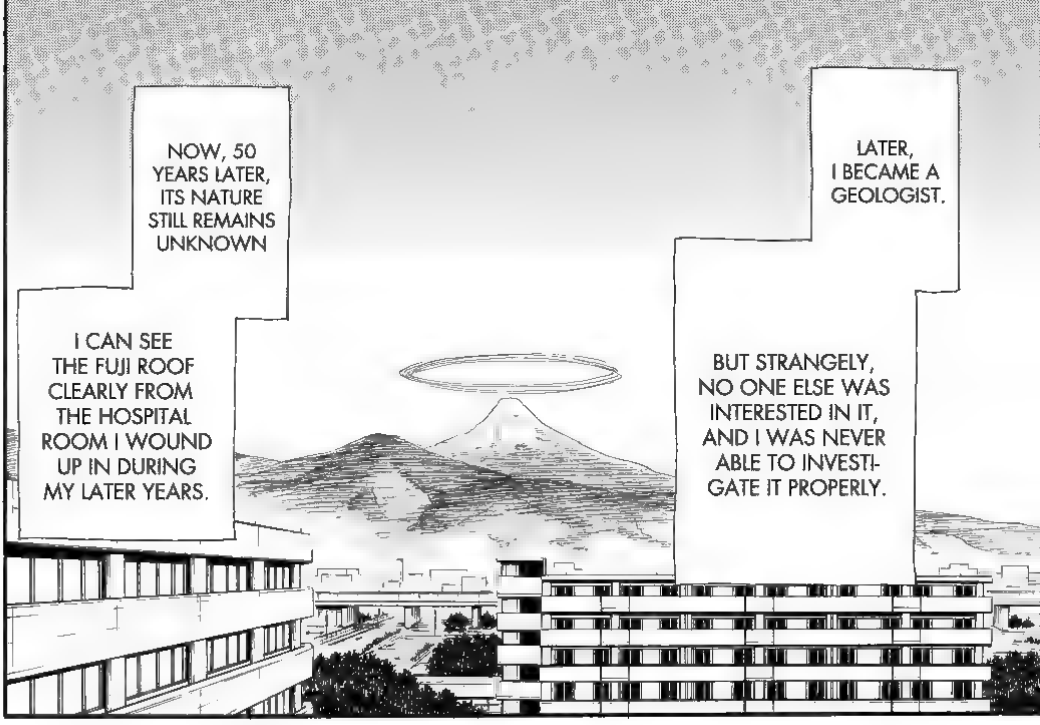
!
THIS PLACE.

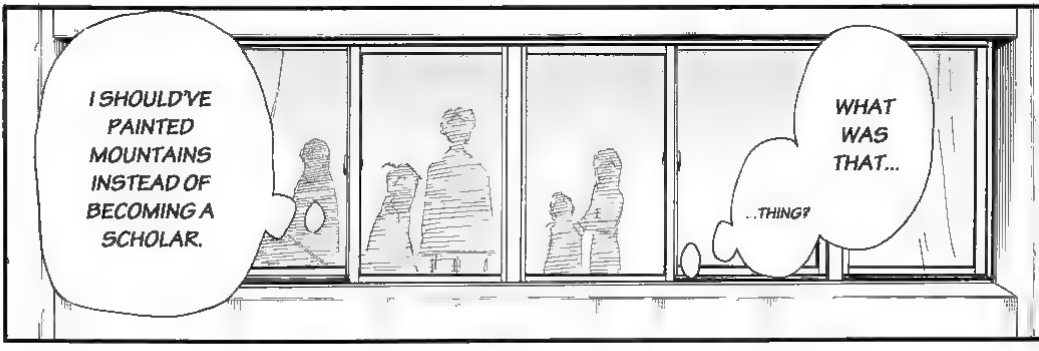
FUUKO!
THEY'RE FINALLY HERE.
KOSUKE! FUUKO!

?! KOSUKE? THE SCAR ON YOUR FOREHEAD IS GONE...
WHAT?!

?
WHERE DID YOU GET THAT NET?
YOU WERE SO LATE WE WERE WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
ARE YOU OKAY?
SORRY...
...TENKO, TAE.

MY HEART POUNDED.
GOOD.
FUUKO! ARE YOU HURT?
NO... I'M FINE. THANKS, NON.
I WANT TO STAY FRIENDS WITH SHAKUJII-KUN, TOO.
AM I ASKING FOR TOO MUCH?
I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT LOVE ..
..BUT I THINK I WANT TO BE WITH NON.
...WE NEVER DISCOVERED THE TRUE NATURE OF THE FUJI ROOF.
ULTIMATELY...


NOW, 50 YEARS LATER, ITS NATURE STILL REMAINS UNKNOWN
I CAN SEE THE FUJI ROOF CLEARLY FROM THE HOSPITAL ROOM I WOUND UP IN DURING MY LATER YEARS.
LATER, I BECAME A GEOLOGIST.
BUT STRANGELY, NO ONE ELSE WAS INTERESTED IN IT, AND I WAS NEVER ABLE TO INVESTI-GATE IT PROPERLY.


I SHOULD'VE PAINTED MOUNTAINS INSTEAD OF BECOMING A SCHOLAR.
WHAT WAS THAT...
...THING?

WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?

CIRCLE 33
DATE

RESTAURANT
SUEHIRA
BEGIN-
NING
OF DE
CEMBER
SUEHIRA

DON'T LET A FAMILY RESTAU-RANT SCARE YOU.

I DON'T HAVE THAT KIND OF MONEY...
YOU SUDDENLY INVITED ME OUT ON THE WEEKEND TO GO TO A FAMILY RESTAURANT?
MENU

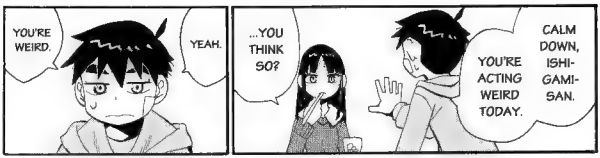
WH-WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, ISHIGAMI-SAN?
DON'T LET YOUR P'AST LIFE TAKE OVER.

SOMETIMES BOYS LIKE TO TREAT CUTE GIRLS TO MEALS
FUUKO-CHAN.

I'LL PAY.
ORDER WHATEVER YOU WANT.
YOU'LL--?! WH-WHY?!

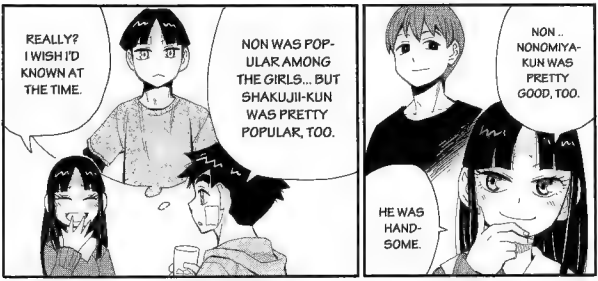
I'M STILL FEELING THE EFFECTS.
YOU JUST SAW THAT PREVIOUS LIFE YESTERDAY.
HEY, YOU SHOULD DRESS LIKE A GIRL.
IT'LL FEEL MORE LIKE A DATE!

A D-DATE?!
I'LL DRESS LIKE A GUY!!
WANT TO TRADE CLOTHES?


CALM DOWN, ISHIGAMI-SAN.
YOU'RE ACTING WEIRD TODAY.
...YOU THINK SO?
YEAH.
YOU'RE WEIRD.

YOU SEEM TO BE HAVING FUN, KOUKO-CHAN.
SHE'S BEEN LIKE THIS SINCE THEN.
THIS MORNING KOUKO WAS LAUGHING WHEN SHE WOKE UP.
WHAT?

PFFFT--!! TENKO-CHAN AND TAE-CHAN...!!
BUT THEY WERE CUTE.
DON'T REMIND ME.
PFFFT
IN THEIR OWN WAY.
GENDER BENDING.
BUT IT'S INTEREST-ING.


REALLY? I WISH I'D KNOWN AT THE TIME.
NON WAS POP-ULAR AMONG THE GIRLS... BUT SHAKUJII-KUN WAS PRETTY POPULAR, TOO.
NON .. NONOMIYA-KUN WAS PRETTY GOOD, TOO.
HE WAS HAND-SOME.

WE CAN GO ANYWHERE!
WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO NEXT?
PFFFT.
HEH HEH HEH...
I'M...A LITTLE SHOCKED NOW I KNOW WHAT GIRLS GOSSIP ABOUT.
...

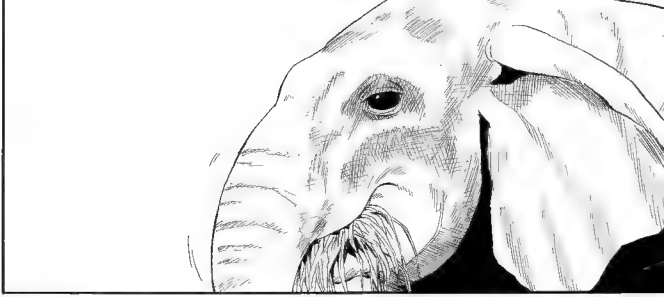
...WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU, ISHIGAMI-SAN?
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU, OKEYA-KUN?
YOU'RE NOT HAPPY
AFTER SEEING THAT PAST LIFE?
NO...
I'M HAPPY.

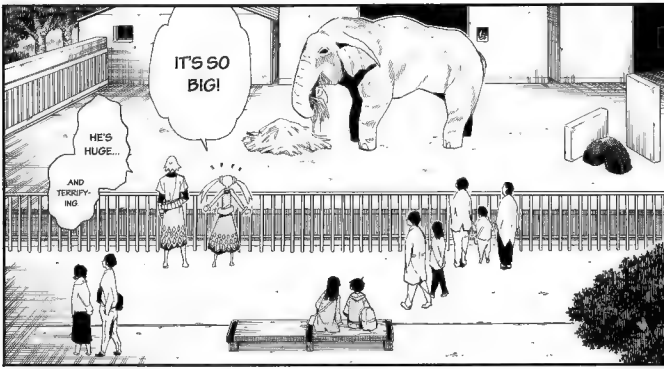
A ROBO-CAT WHOSE HEAD HAD BEEN REPAIRED.
WE SAW A ROBO-CAT.

ROBO-CAT LIVED.
CAROL FIXED HIM.
THAT ROBO-CAT SURVIVED AFTER THE MASSIVE COLLAPSE THAT KILLED US.

HUMANKIND. .
THE EARTH .
SO LET'S CELEBRATE.
THEY WEREN'T DESTROYED.

YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON WHO I CAN SHARE THIS HAPPINESS WITH.
LET'S HANG OUT TODAY.
WHOA.
ISHI-GAMI-SAN...
...CAN SMILE LIKE THAT...?
STAY OUT OF THIS, OLD MAN INSIDE ME!
LIQUOR.
IF WE'RE CELEBRAT-ING, LET'S DRINK.
CREEP
I'D LIKE A DRINK, TOO.
LIQUOR.
I DON'T LIKE THAT FACE...
ANYWAY, I CAN'T BELIEVE ROBO-CAT HIM-SELF WAS A TIME MACHINE...
HOUTAROU
VANN
FLORB
JAVALLE
SHUT UP!!
CROWD




IT'S SO BIG!
HE'S HUGE...
AND TERRIFYING.

THOSE BIRDS ARE BEAUTIFUL.
YOU LIKE LIONS?
WHERE ARE THE LIONS?
HOW SCARY...
THEY'RE LOOKING THIS WAY
THEY'RE COOL.

I-I AM IN THE ART CLUB.
YOU'RE PRETTY GOOD AT DRAWING.

HE'S SO COOL.
HE LOOKS SO STRONG
EAST?
...
HERE I DREW THESE FROM MEMORY.
THESE ARE THE PICTURES THE... ALIENS SHOWED US.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
...

WHAT DO YOU THINK THIS DIAGRAM IS?
...THE SLEEPING TOWER'S GHOST... SPACIFICA, RIGHT?
A SPIRIT CIRCLE AND...
GIVE ME A PEN AND PAPER.
UNIVERSE DIAGRAM?
SOUL..
OH, SOUL STUDIES IS THE SUBJECT FORTUNA RESEARCHED.
...IT LOOKS KIND OF LIKE THE UNIVERSE DIAGRAM WE USED IN SOUL STUDIES.
HMM... WHAT IS THIS?
IT LOOKS LIKE THIS.
...
THE FLOW OF TIME GOES ONLY ONE-WAY, SO IT'S CALLED A RIVER.
SPACE
TIME
PAST
FUTURE
(SPACE-TIME)
THIS LINE IN THE MIDDLE IS CALLED HEAVEN'S RIVER. IT'S THE MOST BASIC SPACE-TIME COORDINATE PLANE.
EVERY POINT IN SPACE IS EXPRESSED WITHIN THE LIMITED WIDTH OF THE LINE.

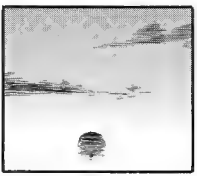
LIKE P-PARALLEL UNIVERSES?
NO.
THERE'S ONLY ONE HEAVEN'S RIVER IN THE MIDDLE.
THEY EXPRESS THE FACT THAT THERE ARE WORLDS IN OTHER DIMENSIONS JUST AS LARGE AS THE MATERIAL UNIVERSE OF HEAVEN'S RIVER.
HEAVEN'S RIVER
THESE LAYERS ABOVE AND BELOW ARE THE SPIRIT OR NON-MATERIAL WORLD.
URGH...
COUNTLESS SOULS POWER THIS MATERIAL WORLD, AND...
EACH LINE CORRESPONDS TO A SOUL.
TAP TAP
THE OTHER LINES ARE NON-MATERIAL... WORLDS OF ENERGY THAT OVERLAP PERFECTLY WITH HEAVEN'S RIVER.
...OH!
...? WAIT, PARALLEL UNIVERSES?
...
N-NO MORE, PLEASE.
THIS IS...
I DON'T GET IT...
I KNOW WHAT THIS DIAGRAM MEANS!

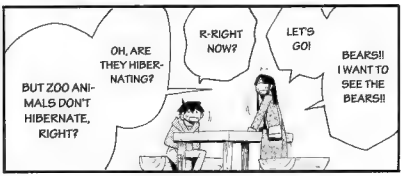
ACTUALLY, A LOT OF YOUR PAST SELVES WERE INTELLECTUALS.
FUUKO-CHAN AND LAFALLE WERE BOTH SMART, AND FORTUNA PROBABLY DREW THIS DIAGRAM.

..YOU'RE SO WEIRD.

BUT I LIKE YOU BETTER THAT WAY.
HEE HEE.
TRUE.

WELL, RIGHT NOW I'M AN IDIOT.




BUT ZOO ANIMALS DON'T HIBERNATE, RIGHT?
OH, ARE THEY HIBERNATING?
R-RIGHT NOW?
LET'S GO!
BEARS!! I WANT TO SEE THE BEARS!!

SIGN: KARAOKE
YOU SEEM TO HAVE... A LOT OF MONEY...
WHERE DID YOU GET IT?
LIS-TEN...
O-OH... OKAY.
MY TREAT.
カラオケ
LET'S GO DO KARAOKE NEXT!!
LATER.

SO ABOUT THAT WORLD...

FLYING THROUGH THE SKY
ULTI-MAGICAL TWIRLY-MAGICAL MARIE
WHOA.
WHOA.
IS SHE COSPLAYING THE ANIME FROM THE SONG?

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE... ALIENS? WERE THEY ACTUALLY EVEN ALIENS?
HONESTLY, I DON'T REALLY WANT TO THINK ABOUT IT.
THE ALIENS MADE COFFEE FOR US ON A STOVE...
JUST RE-MEMBERING IT TEARS MY HEAD APART.

IT WAS THERE FOR 300 YEARS.
300年間ずっとあったって：
THAT THING WAS TOO ABSURD TO UNDER-STAND.
WAS THE FUJI ROOF A UFO AFTER ALL?

REINCARNATION EXCEEDS TIME AND POSSIBILITY.

PAST LIVES IN A PARALLEL UNIVERSE.

FUTURE PAST LIVES.

..THAT'S A PARALLEL UNIVERSE.

BUT...

..BUT FORTUNA SEEMS TO UNDERSTAND IT

IT MAY BE CRAZY...

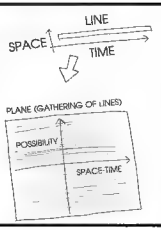
...IT'S INSANE.

THE DIAGRAM I DREW WITH HEAVEN'S RIVER IS ONLY A SMALL PART OF THE UNIVERSE.

THAT DIAGRAM IS A SOUL STUDIES UNIVERSE DIAGRAM FORTUNA DEVELOPED.

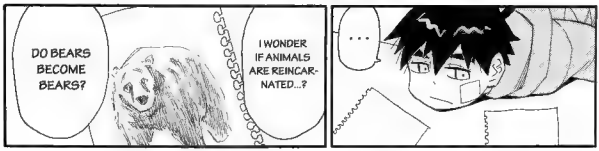
...

THE EXPANDED DIRECTIONS MUST EXPRESS THE COORDINATES OF PARALLEL UNIVERSES.



FORTUNA EXPANDED THE WIDTH OF HEAVEN'S RIVER AND EXPRESSED THE MATERIAL WORLD AS A PLANE INSTEAD OF A LINE.

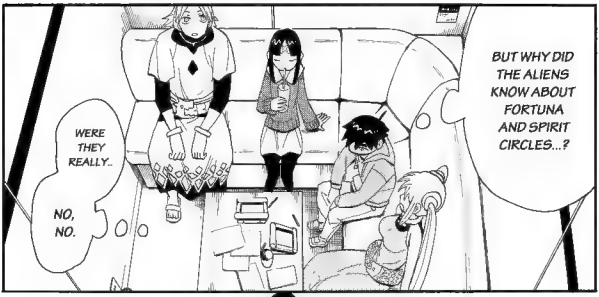
IN THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION, THEY'RE NOTHING MORE THAN DISTANCE.
THAT'S ENOUGH. I DON'T GET IT...
EVEN FLUCTUATIONS IN POSSIBILITY.
TIME.
SPACE.


DO BEARS BECOME BEARS?
I WONDER IF ANIMALS ARE REINCARNATED...?
...

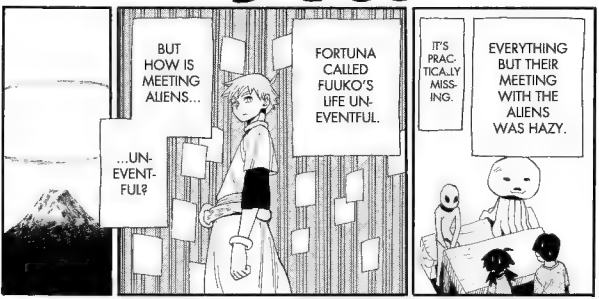
THEY'RE REBORN FROM PERSON TO PERSON SEVERAL HUNDRED TIMES AS WELL.
AFTER TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PLANTS AND THOUSANDS OF ANIMALS, SOULS ARE FINALLY REINCARNATED AS PEOPLE.
IN SOUL STUDIES, I LEARNED SOULS CHOOSE AN ORGANISM APPROPRIATE FOR THEIR EXPERIENCE AND GROWTH.

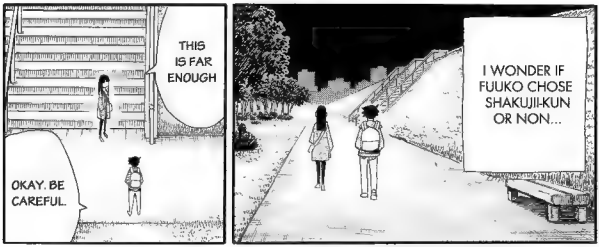
DOLPHINS, WHALES...
GODS...
THERE ARE SEVERAL VIEWS.
WHAT HAPPENS TO SOULS THAT GRADUATE FROM HUMANS?
S-SEVERAL HUNDRED
I'VE BEEN PUSHED AROUND QUITE A BIT BY ONLY SEVEN LIVES...

WHAT?
OH.
...WHAT ABOUT... ALIENS?
...ARE ACTUALLY OUR FUTURE LIVES.
AND..
...MAYBE THOSE TWO WE MET...
HA HA HA, SORRY. I WAS JUST KIDDING.
HA... HA HA HA HA HA HA. NO, NO WAY.


BUT WHY DID THE ALIENS KNOW ABOUT FORTUNA AND SPIRIT CIRCLES...?
WERE THEY REALLY..
NO, NO.

FUUKO AND SHAKUJII-KUN SEEMED TO HAVE HARDLY ANY OF THE CONNECTION OF THEIR PAST LIVES.
MORE THAN ANYTHING, THEIR MEMORIES WERE STRANGE.
THAT FUTURE LIFE WAS FULL OF MYSTERIES. EVERYTHING WAS SO DIFFERENT.

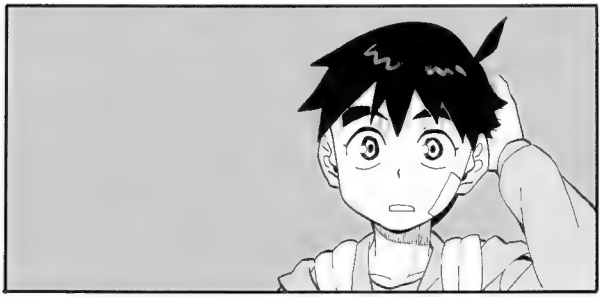

BUT HOW IS MEETING ALIENS...
...UNEVENTFUL?
FORTUNA CALLED FUUKO'S LIFE UNEVENTFUL.
IT'S PRACTICALLY MISSING.
EVERYTHING BUT THEIR MEETING WITH THE ALIENS WAS HAZY.


THIS IS FAR ENOUGH
OKAY. BE CAREFUL.
I WONDER IF FUUKO CHOSE SHAKUJII-KUN OR NON...

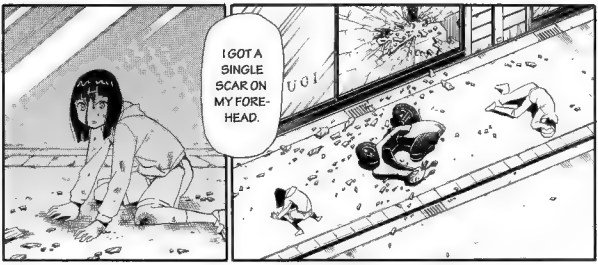
THANKS FOR SPENDING TODAY...
...WITH ME.

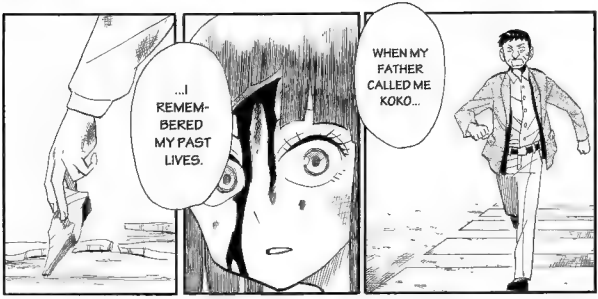
...HUH?
...I HAVE NO REGRETS
NOW...
NO. THANK YOU.
UM... NO...

...OKEYA FUUTA.
I'VE SHOWN YOU ALL THE FACES ISHIGAMI KOUKO WANTED TO SHOW...



ISHI-GAMI-SAN!!
WAIT!
HEY!
SORRY FOR BREAKING MY PROMISE TO TELL YOU THE DAY OF OUR FINAL BATTLE.
GOOD BYE.
I'VE CONVEYED ISHIGAMI KOUKO'S FEELINGS TO YOU.
...IN THE ACCIDENT.
I WITH-DREW THE SETTLEMENT I WAS PAID WHEN I WAS INJURED...
I DIDN'T TELL YOU WHY I HAD SO MUCH MONEY.
OH, I FORGOT.
IT WAS A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT.
IT WAS A COINCI-DENCE.
IT MUST MAKE YOU NEARLY REMEMBER KOKO EVERY TIME YOU LOOK IN A MIRROR.
I'LL REMOVE YOUR SCAR.
THAT SCAR...


I GOT A SINGLE SCAR ON MY FORE-HEAD.


WHEN MY FATHER CALLED ME KOKO...
...I REMEM-BERED MY PAST LIVES.

I GAVE MYSELF THE OTHER...
...CROSSING SCAR...
...TO MAKE MY MEMORY CLEARER.

...I REGAINED MY WARRIOR SELF.
THEN...
I AM EAST'S DAUGHTER, WARRIOR KOUKO.
THE NEXT TIME WE MEET, I WILL DESTROY YOUR EVIL SOUL.
FORTUNA.

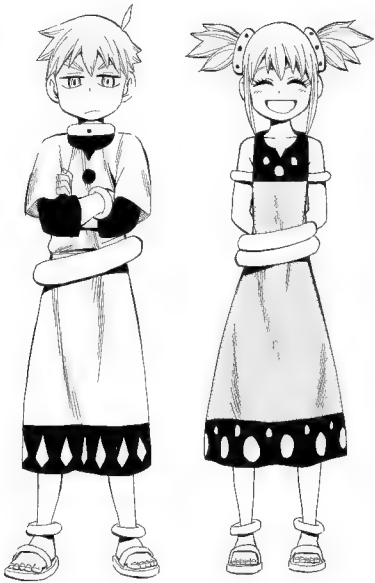
I SAW MY FIRST LIFE FOR TUNA'S.

TWO DAYS BEFORE CLUB BATTLE...

AFTER THAT...

..ISHIGAMI SAN STOPPED COMING TO SCHOOL.

CIRCLE 34
FORTUNA 1



...IS THE FINAL PAST LIFE THAT I MUST BEAR WITNESS TO.
WHAT I'M ABOUT TO SEE
BETWEEN ME AND ISHIGAMI SAN
THE BEGIN NING OF THE ...ON NECTION
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, OKEYA FUUTA
HEY, FORTUNA
MY STORY SHOULD ANSWER ALL YOUR QUESTIONS.
I STILL HAVE A LOT OF QUES TIONS.
...THIS IS THE LAST TIME WE'LL MEET HERE

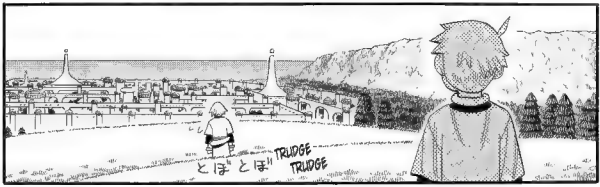
AND
FARE WELL
ENJOY IT
FWOOSH

LATER FOR-TUNA
I'LL SEE YOU DEAD.

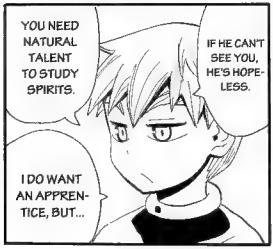
THUD
ドン
THUD
ドン
FORTUNA!!
FORTUNA!
HEY!!
SHUT UP.
ギィ
CREAK
WHAT DO YOU WANT..
...EAST?
THERE YOU ARE.
I HEARD THE MASTER KICKED YOU OUT.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN THIS ABANDONED HOUSE?
YOU'RE NOT GOING BACK TO YOUR PARENTS?
ONE THING AT A TIME.

I SURPASSED THE MASTER.
ALSO, I WASN'T KICKED OUT. I LEFT.
THIS IS MY RESEARCH LAB.
I LIVE HERE NOW.
...BUT YOU'RE BETTER THAN HER, RIGHT?
I WAS GOING TO ASK THE MASTER FOR AN INTRO-DUCTION...
MAKE ME YOUR APPRENTICE, THEN!!
I'M NOT GOOD AT ANYTHING, SO I NEED TO DO SOMETHING.
EAST, YOU WANT TO STUDY SPIRITS?
...OF COURSE I'M BETTER.
...
WHAT DO YOU SEE HERE?

BEAT IT.
YOU'RE HOPELESS.
AW, COME ON.
SHOVE
A WALL?


とぼとぼ
TRUDGE TRUDGE

BUT YOU WANTED AN APPRENTICE.


YOU NEED NATURAL TALENT TO STUDY SPIRITS.
IF HE CAN'T SEE YOU, HE'S HOPELESS.
I DO WANT AN APPRENTICE, BUT...

CALL ME MASTER...
...RUNE.
DON'T CALL ME FUU.
YOU SURE, FUU?

YOU'RE AMAZING, FUU.
MOO-STER...
MASH-TER...
I MADE YOU.
OF COURSE I'M AMAZING.
BUT I DID.
...NO, NOBODY ELSE COULD DO IT.
NOT EVEN THE MASTER COULD...
I AM A GENIUS.
EVERY-ONE ELSE IS STUPID.
NO ONE ELSE CAN DO IT.
BUT I CAN.
IT SURE IS.
THAT'S AMAZING.

THIS WORLD WITHOUT RIVALS IS BORING.
THOSE WHO DO UNDER-STAND FEAR AND ENVY ME.
FEW PEOPLE UNDER-STAND MY GENIUS.

"FORTUNA"
SHUT UP.
FUU, LET'S PLAY.
CHAPTER ONE

TASK 1: RAISE RUNE, THE MAN-MADE SPIRIT, LIKE A NORMAL HUMAN.
OH!
CATCH IT!!
OVER THERE, RUNE.
I GAVE MYSELF ASSIGN-MENTS SO I COULD LIVE IN A BORING WORLD.

...BUT RUNE CAN'T CATCH THEM YET.
I'LL HAVE TO THINK OF ANOTHER WAY...
HMM... I CAME TO A GRAVEYARD BECAUSE I WANTED A SAMPLE OF AN ADULT SPIRIT...

墓石 TOMBSTONE

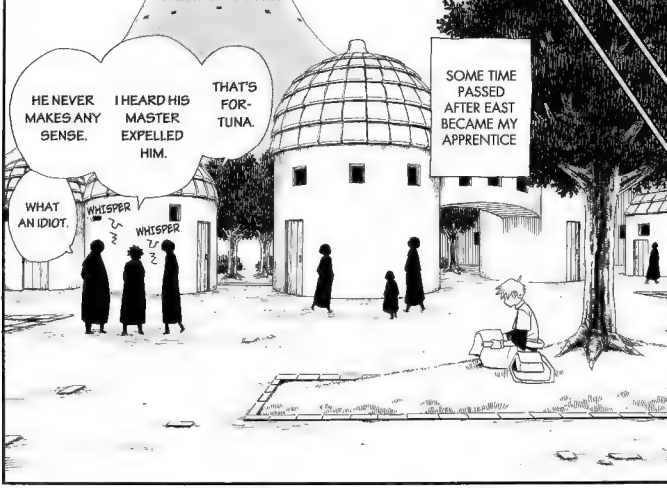
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
EAST?
WHA...
?
WHAT?
?
THIS GHOST IS ALIVE.
...SO I CAN LEARN TO SEE GHOSTS...
WHO'S THIS?
F-FOR-TUNA?
I'VE BEEN COMING TO THE GRAVE-YARD AT NIGHT...
HUH?
...OH. I GET IT.
...YOU CAN SEE RUNE?
BUT YOU COULDN'T THE OTHER DAY...
ALL RIGHT!!
WHAT?!
OKAY, EAST. I ACCEPT YOU AS MY APPRENTICE.
TASK 2: TRAIN AN APPREN-TICE.
THAT'S GREAT.
R-RUNE?
THAT'S ME.

CAN'T YOU?
CAN YOU HEAR ME?
CAN YOU SEE ME?
WHAT KIND OF TRAINING IS THIS?
IF HE HAD ANY POTENTIAL AT ALL, HE WOULD BE WORTH TRAINING.
NO, WAIT. RELAX INSTEAD.
YOU'RE EXPANDING YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS. YOU NEED TO FOCUS TO EXPAND YOUR PERCEPTION SO YOU CAN SEE JUST AS MUCH DURING THE DAY AS AT NIGHT...

...I MADE MYSELF DO IT.
...
CRASH!!
WHOA!!
BOO!!
DID YOU SEE ME?
EVEN IF HE UPSET ME, I REFUSED TO BECOME THE SORT OF MASTER WHO EXPELS HIS APPRENTICES.
FORTUNA, TEA...

...RELIEVED MY BOREDOM.

?
?
MY TWO TASKS...


SOME TIME PASSED AFTER EAST BECAME MY APPRENTICE
THAT'S FORTUNA.
I HEARD HIS MASTER EXPELLED HIM.
HE NEVER MAKES ANY SENSE.
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHAT AN IDIOT.

WOW.
HE ESTABLISHED HIS OWN RESEARCH LAB
IT'S FORTUNA.
LET'S GO.
THAT'S ANCIENT HISTORY...
...
GLARE

WE'RE BACK.
YOU'RE LUCKY YOU'RE SO POPULAR, FORTUNA.
WE'RE BACK.
DID YOU HEAR ALL OF RUNE'S INSTRUCTIONS?
HMPH
I DON'T CARE IF IDIOTS LIKE ME.
...
GLARE
EEEK!

AW...
GO.
KEEP GOING TO THE MARKETPLACE AND PLAZA UNTIL YOU GET EVERYTHING.
TOSS
WE NEED AGAS LEAVES, ROCK SALT...
...YOU ONLY BOUGHT HALF.
HOW'S THIS?
OF COURSE.

IN THIS COUNTRY, PEOPLE ADMIRE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL STRENGTH.
HA HA HA
YOU'RE SO WONDERFUL!
MASTER GOLINTUS!
APPARENTLY EAST ACTUALLY WANTED TO STUDY SPIRITS SO HE COULD BE POPULAR.

SO, YOU CAME TO TOWN.

I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU, FORTUNA.
...
IF ONLY HE HAD MY THICK BROWS...
HEH
..BUT HE HAS A WEAK FEMININE FACE.
NOT ONLY DOES HE HAVE NEITHER...

NOW THAT I'M INDEPENDENT, YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH ME.
SO, WHAT?
YEAH, YEAH, FLAMBE-SAN.
I'M A SENIOR APPREN-TICE.
SHOW SOME RESP-ECT.
...FLAMBE.
WHY, YOU...!!
I DON'T UNDER-STAND WHY THE MASTER SUM-MONED YOU...!!
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
AND YOU'RE A SYCO-PHANT.
HOW DARE YOU LOOK DOWN ON EVERY-ONE--!
YOU'RE AS IRRITATING AS EVER. .
I GOT EVERY-THING THIS TIME.
WE'RE BACK.
HURRY UP.
JUST COME.
WHY?
SHE SUM-MONED ME?

I'VE GOT BUSINESS.
HEAD HOME WITHOUT ME.
えー
WHAT ?
MASTER, I BROUGHT FORTUNA.
...HELLO...
THE DOCTORS GAVE UP. THERE'S NO WAY TO TREAT HER.
...IT WON'T BE LONG NOW.
WHISPER
FOR-TUNA...

IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I EXPERIENCED FAILURE.

I AS GOOD AS KILLED HER.

I'M A GENIUS, BUT I COULDN'T SAVE HER.

I WASN'T STRONG ENOUGH TO TREAT THE MASTER'S ILLNESS.

I COULDN'T SAVE HER.

NO.
AM I INCOMPETENT?
NO.
DID I KILL HER?
I AM A GENIUS.
IMPOSSIBLE.
IF IT'S NOT MY FAULT, IT MEANS I'M NOT A GENIUS.
I AM...
...IT WOULD HAVE SAVED ME.
IF I HAD SOMETHING TO FOCUS MY HATRED ON...
SUPPOSE SOMEBODY KILLED THE MASTER.
ONE SNOWY DAY...
FOR-TUNA!!
FOR-TUNA!!

...PUT IT BACK WHERE YOU FOUND IT.
DON'T BRING IT HERE.

I FOUND A CHILD!!
I...

WHY DID THE CHILD SURVIVE?
IT WAS HIDDEN IN THE CARRIAGE'S TRUNK.
WOLVES?
NO, LET'S RAISE IT!! WOLVES KILLED THIS CHILD'S PARENTS.

...

I'M BACK!! I CHASED THE WOLVES INTO THE MOUNTAINS, JUST LIKE YOU ASKED.
THANK YOU.

YAAAH!
FLINCH
IF RUNE HADN'T CHASED OFF THE WOLVES...
..THEY MAY HAVE EATEN THIS CHILD, TOO.
AND ME.

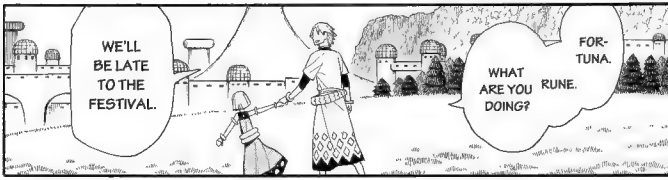
YOU WOULD HAVE SAVED THE CHILD.
NO.
WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE?
HOW DARE YOU USE RUNE.
NOTHING.
I'LL ASK THE RANCHERS TO THE WEST FOR HELP.
..HELPING YOU RAISE THAT CHILD.
I'M NOT...
NOT REI.
THERE'S SOMETHING EMBROIDERED. COULD THIS BE IT?
REI?
WHAT'S ITS NAME?
SAGE OF SNOW, KOKO.
NAME HER KOKO.
REI IS THE GODDESS OF WAR.

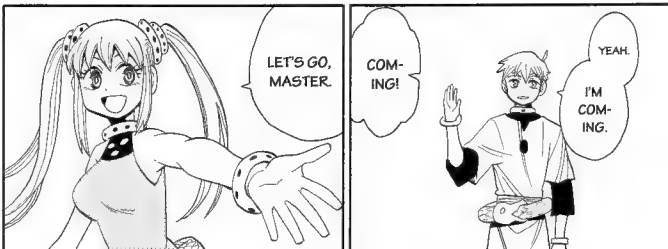
SHE'S CRYING. GO TO THE RANCH.
ISN'T THAT...
HUH? IS REI THE GODDESS OF WAR?
WAH...
WAAAH!
...YOU CAN'T JUST CHANGE HER NAME...
BUT...
BUT I DID NOTHING.
EAST WORE HIMSELF OUT CARING FOR THE CHILD.
SHE SHOWED POTEN-TIAL.
WHEN SHE GREW OLDER, I TRIED TEACHING HER ABOUT SPIRITS.
KOKO SEEMED TO BE ABLE TO SEE RUNE, AND SHE ADORED HER.
RUNE OFTEN PLAYED WITH KOKO.

...BUT SHE NEVER THOUGHT TO CALL HIM FATHER.
FA-THER.
?
EAST.
MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE WE CALLED HIM EAST...
EAST!!
SHE USED NO HONORIFICS WITH HER ADOPTIVE FATHER.
I THOUGHT I COULD HAVE AT LEAST HELPED WITH THAT.
EAST!!
THE WOUNDS I RECEIVED WHEN I COULDN'T SAVE MY MASTER.
ONE DAY...
...I REALIZED MY WOUNDS HAD HEALED

I KNEW.
TIME, AND THE OTHERS, HAD HEALED ME.

BEING WITH THEM WAS UNBELIEVABLY TRANQUIL.
GRATITUDE AND RE-PENTANCE NATURALLY WELLED UP INSIDE ME.


WE'LL BE LATE TO THE FESTIVAL.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
FOR-TUNA.
RUNE.


LET'S GO, MASTER.
COM-ING!
YEAH.
I'M COM-ING.

I FELT A SENSE OF FULFILL-MENT.
BOREDOM WAS QUIET...
...AND COM-FORT-ABLE.
FOR-TUNA!!
IT FILLED ME...

IT'S EAST...!!
WHAT'S WRONG, KOKO?

HE JUST SUDDENLY COLLAPSED..
NO.
DID HE EAT SOME-THING BAD?

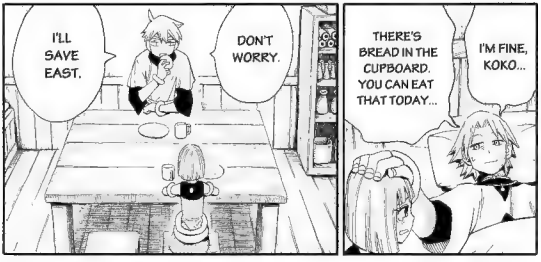
THESE MARKS...

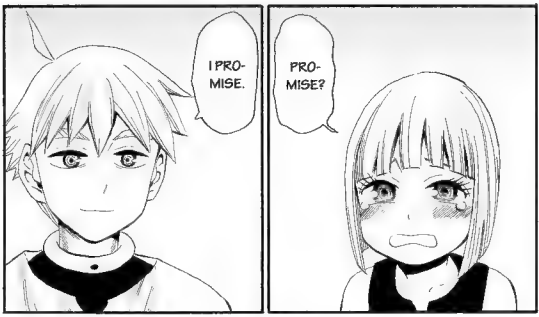
...AND SPILLED
IT'S THE SAME AS THE MASTER'S ILLNESS.
...OVER FLOWED

CIRCLE 35
FORTUNA 2

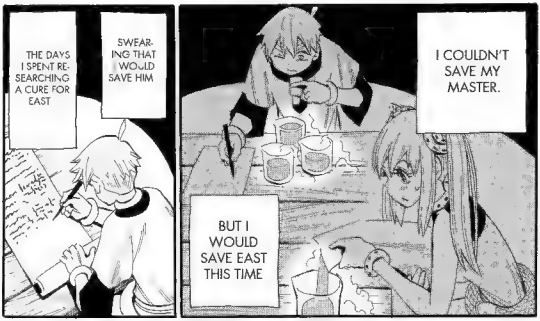
ZZSSSHH

ARE YOU OKAY, EAST?
EAST...


I'LL SAVE EAST.
DON'T WORRY.
THERE'S BREAD IN THE CUPBOARD. YOU CAN EAT THAT TODAY...
I'M FINE, KOKO...


I PRO-
MISE.
PRO-
MISE?

. .STRUCK WITH THE SAME ILL NESS MY MASTER HAD
THE DAY OF THE FES- TIVAL, EAST COLLAPSED...


THE DAYS I SPENT RE- SEARCHING A CURE FOR EAST
SWEAR- ING THAT I WOULD SAVE HIM
I COULDN'T SAVE MY MASTER.
BUT I WOULD SAVE EAST THIS TIME

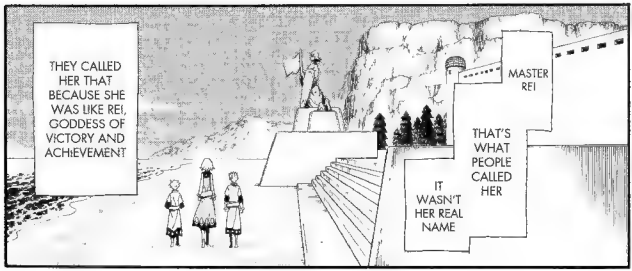
...WERE TRULY FULFILLING.
IT REMINDS ME OF MY PAST.
RESEARCH IS SO FUN.
THIS IS SPIRIT MATTER.
BEAUTIFUL, ISN'T IT?
WHEN I STUDIED UNDER MY MASTER.
IF YOU GATHER ENOUGH OF IT, CAN YOU MAKE A SPIRIT, MASTER?

HALF? SPIRIT MATERIAL IS DIFFERENT FROM SPIRITS BECAUSE OF ITS CONSCIOUSNESS? INTERMEDIARY MATTER OR SPECIAL STIMULUS OR..
MUMBLE MUMBLE
YOU'RE HALF RIGHT.
WHAT?
YOU KNOW UP TO SEVEN?
+MMM.. A COMBINATION OF THE SEVEN LEVELS..?
THANKS FOR GOING OUT TO THE STORE-HOUSE, FLAMBE.
BUT I DON'T THINK THREE IS ENOUGH FOR FORTUNA.
THE FIFTH SCROLLS ARE ON THE SHELF. COULD YOU GO GET THEM?
AUNT. I MEAN, MASTER, I BROUGHT THE THIRD SCROLLS.
BUT ISN'T IT TOO SOON?

HE SEEMS TO UNDERSTAND SPIRIT CONVERSION EQUATIONS, TOO.
BUT HE'S SOLVING DIMENSIONAL EQUATIONS USING COSMIC DIAGRAMS.
MUMBLE MUMBLE
HE CAN'T POSSIBLY UNDERSTAND THEM!
THE FIFTH SCROLL?!
..BUT I WAS QUITE YOUNG.
IN TERMS OF COSMIC FORCES, IT'S A 14-LETTER LANGUAGE
.. OH, I SEE.
, DON'T REMEMBER HOW OLD , WAS
WHAT?!
THAT'S WHY
WHAT?
I'M STILL LEARNING THOSE...
WHA..
. WERE THE ONLY ONES WHO COULD HOLD PROPER CONVERSATIONS WITH ME.
MY MASTER AND HER SENIOR APPRENTICE FLAMBE...
...TO LET ME BECOME AN APPRENTICE OF THE CITY'S ONLY SPIRIT SCHOLAR
I CONVINCED MY PARENTS..
THE CITY WAS FULL OF IDIOTS.

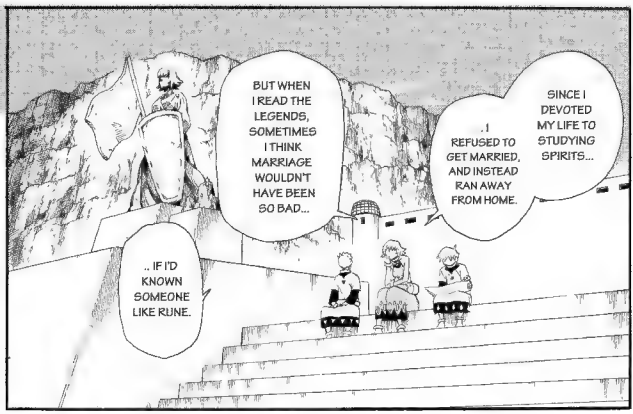
..AFTER A YEAR, I STOPPED BEING ABLE TO TALK TO FLAMBE.
BUT.
LIKE THE OTHERS..
.. HE STARTED TO AVOID ME
MY MASTER WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO UNDER-STOOD ME.

...WAS ONLY ONE WHO WAS "HUMAN" TO ME.
MY MASTER .

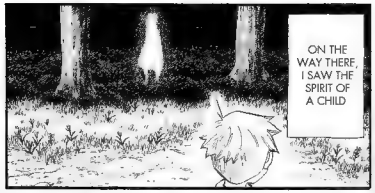

THEY CALLED HER THAT BECAUSE SHE WAS LIKE REI, GODDESS OF VICTORY AND ACHIEVEMENT
MASTER REI
THAT'S WHAT PEOPLE CALLED HER
IT WASN'T HER REAL NAME

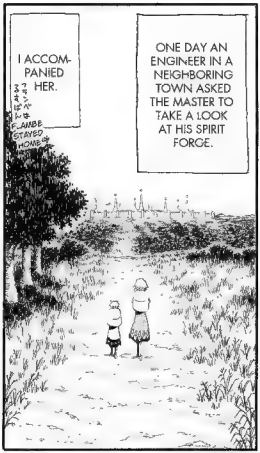
ACCORDING TO LEGEND, THE GODDESS RE. LOVED THE FAIRY RUNE LIKE A DAUGHTER.
POOR RUNE.
RUNE'S STATUE WAS DESTROYED LONG AGO IN A WAR.

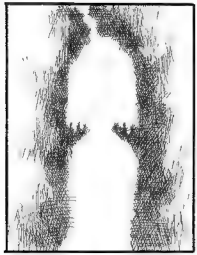
BESIDE REI ONCE STOOD A STATUE OF HER ATTENDANT.
THE FAIRY RUNE


BUT WHEN I READ THE LEGENDS, SOMETIMES I THINK MARRIAGE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO BAD...
.. IF I'D KNOWN SOMEONE LIKE RUNE.
..I REFUSED TO GET MARRIED, AND INSTEAD RAN AWAY FROM HOME.
SINCE I DEVOTED MY LIFE TO STUDYING SPIRITS...

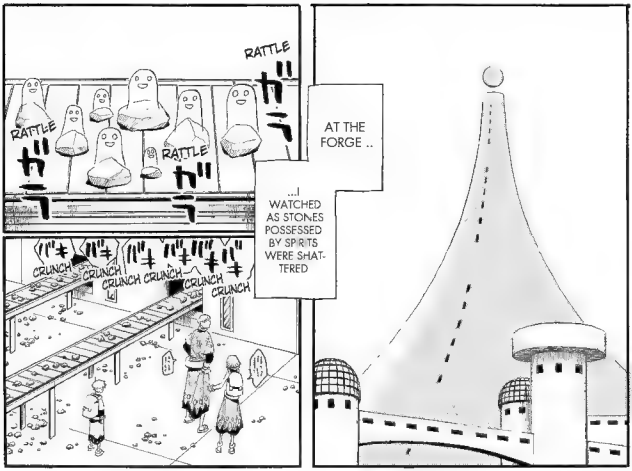
...
...WHY AM I TELLING THIS TO CHILDREN?

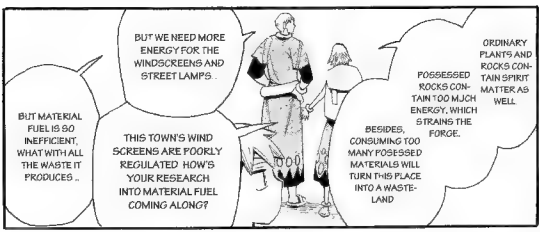

ON THE WAY THERE, I SAW THE SPIRIT OF A CHILD

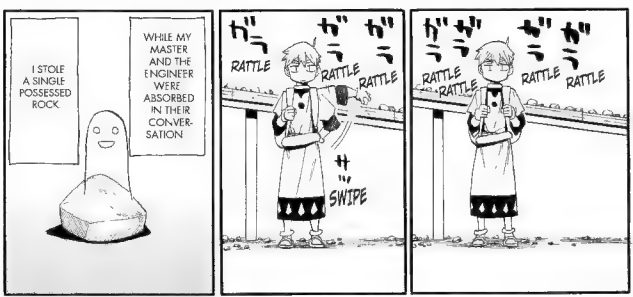

I ACCOMPANIED HER.
ONE DAY AN ENGINEER IN A NEIGHBORING TOWN ASKED THE MASTER TO TAKE A LOOK AT HIS SPIRIT FORCE.

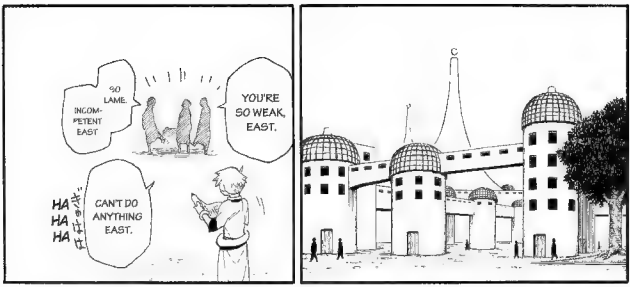


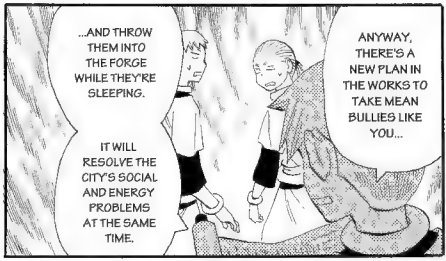
DON'T STARE.
HEY.


RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
AT THE FORGE ..
...I WATCHED AS STONES POSSESSED BY SPIRITS WERE SHATTERED
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH


BUT MATERIAL FUEL IS SO INEFFICIENT, WHAT WITH ALL THE WASTE IT PRODUCES ..
BUT WE NEED MORE ENERGY FOR THE WINDSCREENS AND STREET LAMPS ..
THIS TOWN'S WIND SCREENS ARE POORLY REGULATED. HOW'S YOUR RESEARCH INTO MATERIAL FUEL COMING ALONG?
BESIDES, CONSUMING TOO MANY POSSESSED MATERIALS WILL TURN THIS PLACE INTO A WASTE-LAND
POSSESSED ROCKS CONTAIN TOO MUCH ENERGY, WHICH STRAINS THE FORGE.
ORDINARY PLANTS AND ROCKS CONTAIN SPIRIT MATTER AS WELL


I STOLE A SINGLE POSSESSED ROCK
WHILE MY MASTER AND THE ENGINEER WERE ABSORBED IN THEIR CONVERSATION
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
SWIPE
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE

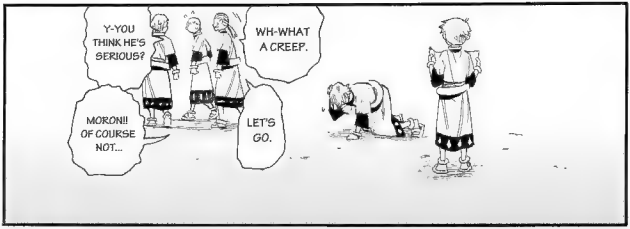

SO LAME. INCOM-PETENT EAST
YOU'RE SO WEAK, EAST.
HA HA HA
CAN'T DO ANYTHING EAST.


...AND THROW THEM INTO THE FORGE WHILE THEY'RE SLEEPING.
IT WILL RESOLVE THE CITY'S SOCIAL AND ENERGY PROBLEMS AT THE SAME TIME.
ANYWAY, THERE'S A NEW PLAN IN THE WORKS TO TAKE MEAN BULLIES LIKE YOU...

HUH?
FOR-TUNAI
I HEARD THE SOUL FORGE DOESN'T HAVE ENOUGH FUEL.
STEP STEP

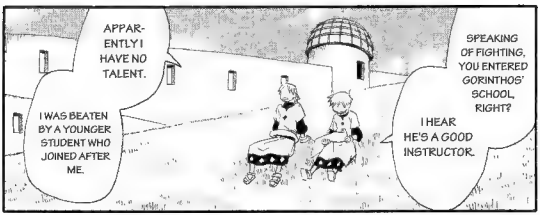
LET'S SEE... WHAT ARE YOU NAMES AGAIN?
I'M HELPING MY MASTER MAKE A LIST OF NAUGHTY KIDS TO SEND TO THE ENGINEERS.

GO AWAY.
L-LIAR!!
SHOVE


Y-YOU THINK HE'S SERIOUS?
MORON!! OF COURSE NOT...
WH-WHAT A CREEP.
LET'S GO.

THAT FIGHT NEARLY BROKE ME.
YOU'RE TALL. YOU SHOULD TRY WORKING OUT.

OUCH.
OH.. FORTUNA.
THANKS

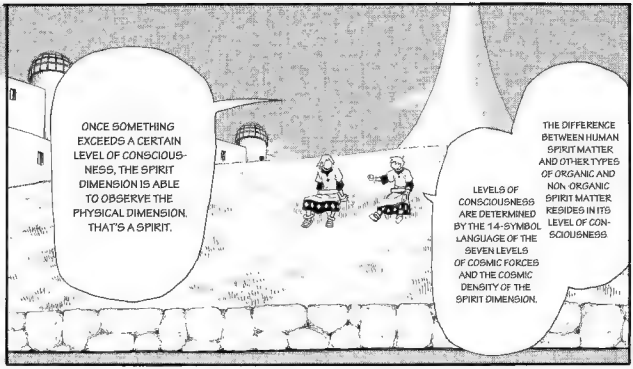

APPARENTLY I HAVE NO TALENT.
I WAS BEATEN BY A YOUNGER STUDENT WHO JOINED AFTER ME.
SPEAKING OF FIGHTING, YOU ENTERED GORINTHOS' SCHOOL, RIGHT?
I HEAR HE'S A GOOD INSTRUCTOR.

I'M CONDUCTING MY OWN RESEARCH NOW
I'VE FINISHED READING MOST OF MY MASTER'S WRITINGS.
RUMMAGE

DON'T MAKE THAT FACE.
LAME!
HA HA HA.
HOW HAVE YOU BEEN LATELY?

WHAT IS THAT? A ROCK?
A SPIRIT.
I'M STUDYING THE FUSION RATE OF PHYSICAL AND SPIRIT MATTER.

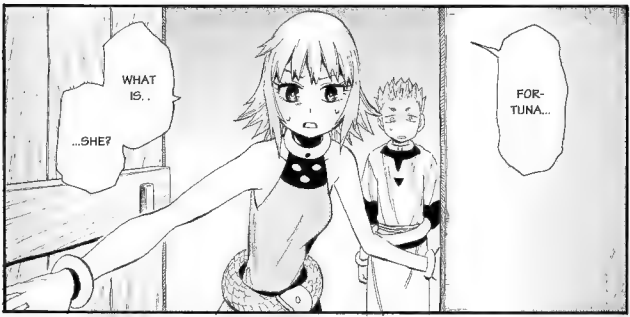
ON THIS


ONCE SOMETHING EXCEEDS A CERTAIN LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS, THE SPIRIT DIMENSION IS ABLE TO OBSERVE THE PHYSICAL DIMENSION. THAT'S A SPIRIT.
LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS ARE DETERMINED BY THE 14-SYMBOL LANGUAGE OF THE SEVEN LEVELS OF COSMIC FORCES AND THE COSMIC DENSITY OF THE SPIRIT DIMENSION.
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HUMAN SPIRIT MATTER AND OTHER TYPES OF ORGANIC AND NON-ORGANIC SPIRIT MATTER RESIDES IN ITS LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS

YOU'RE AMAZING.
NOT THAT YOU'D UNDERSTAND.
IN THE SPIRIT DIMENSION, THE WORLD ITSELF IS A SINGLE MASSIVE CONSCIOUSNESS THAT...
GASP

SEE YOU LATER.
THANKS.
OF COURSE I AM. I'M A GENIUS.
DON'T LET ANYONE ELSE PICK ON YOU
LATER.

I COULD DO IT.
BECAUSE I'M A GENIUS
THAT'S RIGHT. I AM AMAZING
BECAUSE I'M A GENIUS


WHAT IS. .
...SHE?
FOR-TUNA...

FOR-TUNA!!
I'M NOT SURPRISED MASTER.
YOU KNEW INSTANTLY SHE'S NOT AN ORDINARY SPIRIT.
I'VE GIVEN HER A PSEUDO-SOUL BY FORMING A CONSCIOUSNESS OUT OF THE SPIRIT DIMENSION THROUGH MY SOUL.
ARTIFICIAL.
!!
I MADE HER FROM THE SPIRIT OF A CHILD AND THE RECONSTRUCTED SPIRIT MATTER OF THE SPIRITS FOUND IN PLANTS AND MINERALS
SHE'S AN ARTIFICIAL SPIRIT.
I THOUGHT THAT RUNE SHOULD STAND BESIDE HER GODDESS REI.
RUNE.
I NAMED HER AFTER THE LEGENDARY FAIRY.
...I'M EXPELLING YOU.
RUNE?
HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE STRUCTURAL FORMULA?

YOU'RE EXPELLING ME?!
WHY, MASTER?!
FOR-TUNA!!
EX-PEL?
FOR-FOR... FUU...?
A TABOO THAT SHAKES THE DEFINITIONS AND DIGNITY OF HUMANKIND... AND HUMANITY.
...BECAUSE RESEARCHING HUMANOID ARTIFICIAL SPIRITS IS HERESY.
YOU MUSTN'T CONTINUE STUDYING SPIRITS.
THEY SAY SPIRIT SCHOLARS WHO FOLLOW THAT PATH EVENTUALLY BECOME HEART-LESS MADMEN
DID YOU NOT HAVE ANY DOUBTS OR HESITATION ABOUT TOYING WITH A HUMAN SOUL?
THE IDEA ITSELF IS DANGER-OUS.
MOST OF THEM DO TURN TO CRUEL METHODS IN THEIR RESEARCH.
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT WITH NO EXAMPLES OF SUCCESS?!
ISN'T THAT JUST THE JEALOUSY OF THE INCOM-PETENT AND ORDINARY--
W-WAIT A MINUTE!!

...I RECOMMEND YOU FIND WORK YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR HANDS

LEARNING IS DANGEROUS FOR YOU

CREAK

I'LL SEND YOU YOUR THINGS LATER.

GO HOME TO YOUR PARENTS

I CAN'T ALLOW AN ARTIFICIAL SPIRIT TO CROSS THE THRESHOLD OF A SPIRIT SCHOLAR'S LAB.

...SHE DID NOT REBUKE ME FOR CONTINUING TO STUDY SPIRITS

BUT SEVERAL YEARS LATER...

...ON HER SICKBED...

. SO I COULDN'T TELL HER I DIDN'T.
THAT WAS ALL.
SHE NEVER ASKED IF I RESENTED HER...

I'M GLAD YOU LOOK WELL.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
I'M SORRY. I JUST WANTED TO SEE YOUR FACE.

I THOUGHT I COULD TELL HER ONCE I CURED HER .
. AND SO REMAINED SILENT.
I FELT LIKE I HAD MANY OTHER THINGS TO TELL HER, BUT I FORGOT THEM.

MY MASTER DIED
THAT'S WHAT I ARRO-GANTLY BELIEVED.
I CAN CURE HER
I AM A GENIUS.

YOU CALLED ME AMAZING.
EAST.

KOKO
I HAVEN'T SHOWN YOU MUCH UNTIL NOW.
. BUT I'LL SHOW YOU JUST HOW AMAZING I AM
RIGHT, RUNE?
THAT'S RIGHT. I AM AMAZING. I'M A GENIUS.
I JUST DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME BEFORE.
THIS TIME I CAN REACH IT
THIS TIME...
I *WILL* SAVE EAST
THIS TIME I WILL PROVE I CAN REACH THE TRUTHS OF THIS WORLD.
I'M DOING GREAT.
AMAZING! MY BRAIN REACHES BEYOND THE CLOUDS–NO, THE STARS–NO, EVEN BEYOND THAT!!
AFTER ALL, LOOK AT HOW FUN THIS IS.

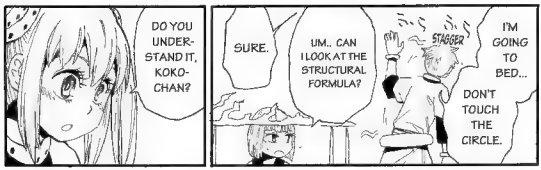
I SEE IT.
よ〜〜
HEY!
どっ
ばぁん
SPLASH
あんたが大将よ
YOU'RE THE BOSS!

I UNDER-
STAND THE
UNIVERSE.
BOOM
どばぁ
POP
ぽかっ
GENIUS
天才
はははははははははははは
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

AN UNCLASSIFIED AND ALMIGHTY SPIRIT MATTER.
A DIMENSIONAL RING OF INTERFERENCE.
I CALL IT THE SPIRIT CIRCLE.

WHAT IS THIS? IT'S NOT... MEDICINE?
HOW ARE YOU GOING TO CURE EAST WITH THIS...?

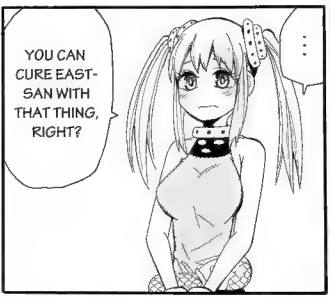
I KNOW YOU'LL MAKE A GOOD SPIRIT SCHOLAR.
THERE'S A LIBRARY IN THE WESTERN CITY. THERE ARE MANY THINGS I WANT TO SHOW YOU.
I KNOW! ONCE EAST IS BETTER, WE'LL GO ON A TRIP TOGETHER.
DON'T WORRY. IT'S OKAY.


DO YOU UNDER-STAND IT, KOKO-CHAN?
SURE.
UM.. CAN I LOOK AT THE STRUCTURAL FORMULA?
STAGGER
I'M GOING TO BED...
DON'T TOUCH THE CIRCLE.

...SCARES ME.
IT...
NO, BUT...

CIRCLE 36
FORTUNA 3

I'M GOING TO THE NEXT TOWN OVER TO GET ENERGY.
LOOK AFTER KOKO AND EAST.
I SEE. ENERGY, HUH...

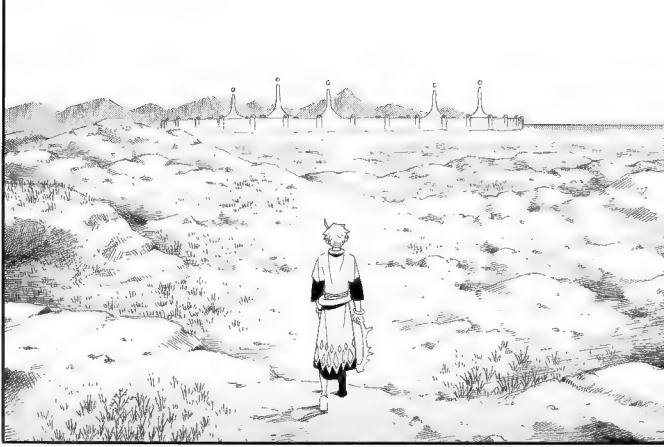

YOU CAN CURE EAST-SAN WITH THAT THING, RIGHT?
...

YEAH. IT TAKES A LOT OF ENERGY TO USE THIS.

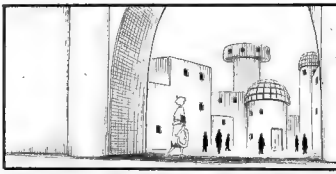
...SEEMED PRETTY ANXIOUS...
. WHILE LOOKING AT ITS STRUCTURAL DIAGRAMS.

STRICTLY SPEAKING, IT'S VERY SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT FROM CURING HIM, BUT... WHAT'S WRONG?
YESTERDAY KOKO-CHAN...

PACK? WHY?
WHEN KOKO WAKES UP, TELL HER TO PACK HER THINGS.
I WILL NOT FAIL.
ITS DESIGN IS PERFECT.
WE'RE GOING ON A TRIP.
THE FOUR OF US.
I'M SO EXCITED!!
OH, BOY!!

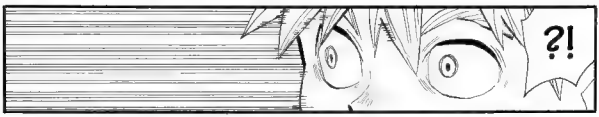


THE MASTER WARNED THEM...
THEY'VE BEEN HARVESTING TOO MUCH SPIRIT MATTER.
THE AREA AROUND THE CITY'S A WASTELAND.

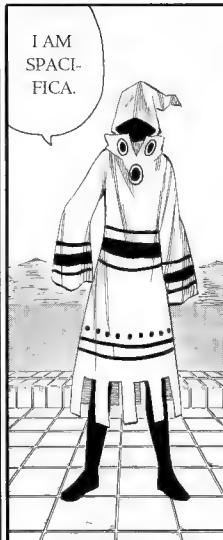


KOKO-CHAN SEEMED PRETTY ANXIOUS...
...CARE ABOUT THAT?
DAMN IT. WHY SHOULD I...
I...
MAS-TER...
BUT I'M A GENIUS.
IT WILL WORK.

NYOOOM

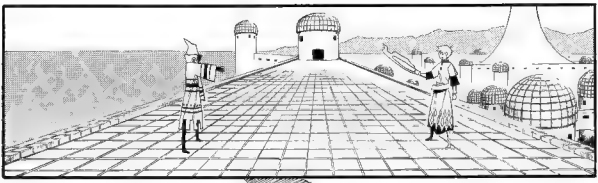

?!

GIVE ME THE RING.
YOU ARE NOT READY FOR IT YET.


I AM SPACI-FICA.

WHO... NO, WHAT IS THAT...?
WHERE DID HE... NO...
HA... HA HA HA...
THIS... THIS PRES-ENCE...
I'VE BEEN ACKNOWL-EDGED BY THE STAR SPIRITS!!
IMPOS-SIBLE!!
THIS IS AMAZ-ING!!
YES!!
NOW I KNOW THIS THING WORKS!!

IF A BEING AS GREAT AS YOURSELF IS CAPABLE OF SUCH A TASK, THAT IS!!
IF YOU WANT IT, COME AND GET IT, HIGHER BEING!!
YOU'RE NOT READY FOR
GIVE ME THE RING.



IT HAS THE POWER TO DESTROY YOU.
FWISH
BE CAREFUL HOW YOU USE IT.

YOU'VE RESTORED MY CONFIDENCE.
THANK YOU.

I'LL DO IT.
THIS IS HOW I'LL SAVE EAST.
FWOOM
FWOOM
FWOOM
OPPOSING DIMENSIONS, EXPAND.
I'LL WIPE AWAY MY FAILURE TO SAVE MY MASTER...
FWOOM
...AND OVERCOME "DEATH!!"
CAPTURE SPIRIT MATTER!!

PSHOOM
ボ FWOOM
ボ FWOOM
ボ FWOOM
ボ FWOOM
ボ FWOOM
ボ FWOOM
ボ FWOOM
(Ay)

ENERGY SUCCESSFULLY ACQUIRED!!
SEVENTH SPIRIT LEVEL FIRE, IGNITE!!
I'LL HEAD WEST AND COLLECT ENERGY FROM THE OTHER SPIRIT FORGES.
HEY!! THE INSTRUMENTS ARE ACTING UP!
MURMUR
MURMUR
WHAT? NO...
HEY, DID YOU SEE A FLASH OF LIGHT?
MURMUR
MURMUR
MURMUR
BUT THIS ISN'T ENOUGH ENERGY.
EVEN THE RESERVES?!
WE'RE NEARLY OUT OF ENERGY!!
HURRY, HURRY...
ALL THE PRESSURE IN THE SPIRIT FORGE SUDDENLY VANISHED!!
WHAT'S WRONG?!
NOW THAT THEY'RE UNBALANCED, THE OTHER FORGES COULD EXPLODE!!
SORRY.
OH, NO!!
THE SPIRIT FORGES IN THE CITY SUPPORT EACH OTHER!

FWOOM

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
HEY, AREN'T YOU FORTUNA FROM THE NEIGHBORING CITY?
TURN
NO.

THE THIRD FORGE JUST LOST ALL PRESSURE, TOO...
SNEAK
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "TOO"?!
THIS ONE, TOO?! WHAT'S GOING ON?!
WHAT WAS THAT?! ALL THE SPIRIT FORGE'S PRESSURE...

WORD TRAVELED FAST.
LIKE THIS.

FORTUNA?! I'VE HEARD THE NAME, BUT WHAT DOES HE LOOK LIKE?
I HEARD THE NEIGHBORING TOWN'S SPIRIT SCHOLAR NAMED FORTUNA WAS SEEN RUNNING FROM THE THIRD TOWER RIGHT AFTER THE INCIDENT...
HAS ANYONE SEEN ANY SUSPICIOUS PEOPLE AROUND?!

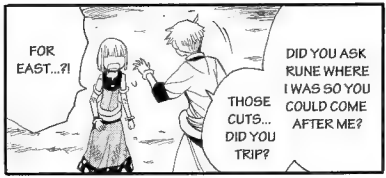
IT'S GOING TO EXPLODE!!
KEEEEE
FORGE FOUR IS GLOWING!!

BOOM
FORGE FOUR EXPLODED!!
I NEED TO GET HOME...
FIVE IS GETTING THERE, TOO!
RUN!
FIVE IS FULL! THE CITY WILL TURN INTO A SEA OF FIRE!!
GET TO THE OCEAN!! TO THE BOATS...
ROAR

THAT'S QUITE A SIGHT...
...
HUFF HUFF HUFF...
NO...
OH, NO...
SLUMP
I'M TOO LATE...
I...
KOKO...
FOR-TUNA...
WHY...
WHY DID YOU DO THIS?!

TO SAVE EAST.
WHY? WELL...

HOW MANY SPIRIT FORGES...
THE CITY... IT'S...


FOR EAST...?!
THOSE CUTS... DID YOU TRIP?
DID YOU ASK RUNE WHERE I WAS SO YOU COULD COME AFTER ME?

HOW MANY PEOPLE DIED TO--

NOT BAD.
DID YOU FIGURE OUT WHAT I WAS DOING FROM THE DIA-GRAMS?

WHAT..

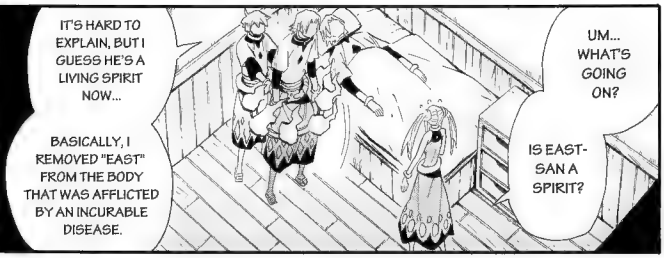
IN A FEW YEARS, WE CAN GATHER THE REMAIN-ING SPIRIT MATTER.
WHO KNOWS? BUT PROB-ABLY A LOT.

WHAT'S WRONG? I'LL LEAVE YOU BEHIND.
STEP
COME QUICKLY. LET'S GET BACK TO EAST.
KOKO?

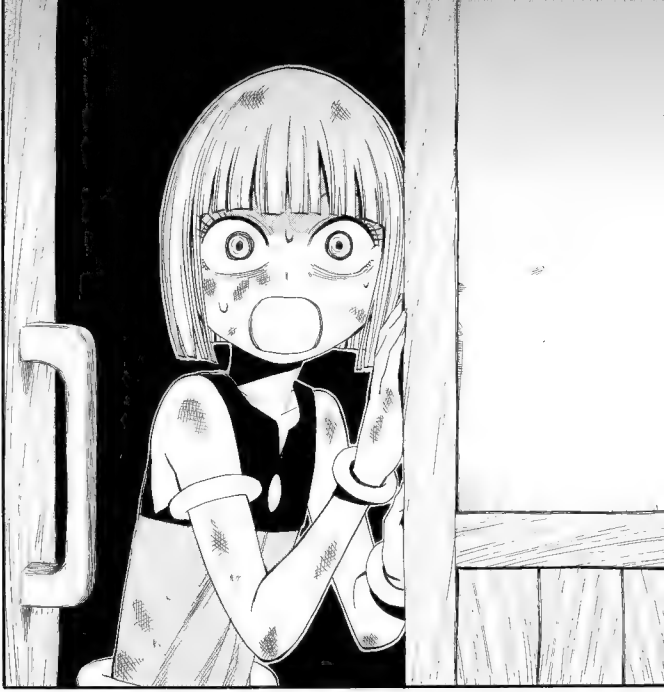
I'M GOING ON AHEAD.
DON'T TRIP AND FALL ON YOUR WAY HOME.
ARE YOU CAPTI-VATED BY IT?
IT IS A MAG-NIFICENT SIGHT.
...
...
CRACKLE
バチッ
CRACKLE
バチバチ
CRACKLE
バチッ
CRACKLE
バチバチ
CRACKLE
I'M BACK...

バチ
CRACKLE
バチ
バチ
CRACKLE
CRACKLE

I CONVERTED YOUR SPIRIT INTO LIGHT.
YOUR SPIRIT FORM SHOULD BE ABLE TO RETAIN THE SAME LEVEL OF MENTAL CLARITY AS YOUR PHYSICAL BODY.
FORTUNA...?
WHAT IS... WHAT AM I...?


IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN, BUT I GUESS HE'S A LIVING SPIRIT NOW...
BASICALLY, I REMOVED "EAST" FROM THE BODY THAT WAS AFFLICTED BY AN INCURABLE DISEASE.
UM... WHAT'S GOING ON?
IS EAST-SAN A SPIRIT?

...NOT TO CURE THE DISEASE?!
WELL?! WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MY IDEA...



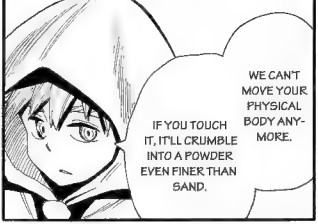
I'M... A SPIRIT...

I SEE.
YOU REALLY ARE AMAZ-ING...
...FOR-TUNA.

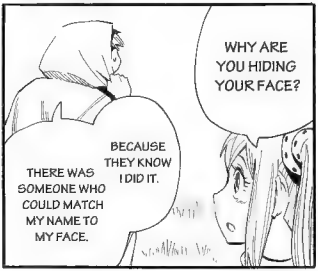
OF COURSE I AM.

YOU'RE BACK, KOKO?
PACK YOUR THINGS.
WE'RE LEAVING NOW.
KOKO...
KOKO-CHAN...
PLINK

HEY, KOKO?
FINE. I'LL PACK YOUR THINGS FOR YOU.
I'M GOING TO PACK.
COME ON, KOKO.
EAST, HOLD ONTO THAT CIRCLE. YOU AND IT ARE A SET NOW.

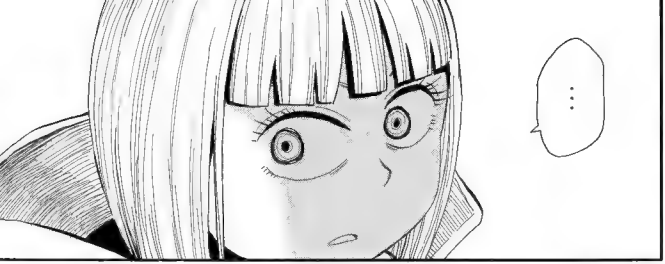

WE CAN'T MOVE YOUR PHYSICAL BODY ANY-MORE.
IF YOU TOUCH IT, IT'LL CRUMBLE INTO A POWDER EVEN FINER THAN SAND.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?
AND WE LEFT MY BODY ON THE BED...
WE'RE HEADING TO THE WESTERN CAPITAL WHERE THERE'S A MAJOR LIBRARY.


WHY ARE YOU HIDING YOUR FACE?
BECAUSE THEY KNOW I DID IT.
THERE WAS SOMEONE WHO COULD MATCH MY NAME TO MY FACE.

I MADE A MISTAKE.
I THOUGHT I'D STAND OUT MORE IF I HUNG OUT AROUND THE SPIRIT FORGES IN TRAVELING GARB.
BUT THEY MAY HAVE ALREADY PUT OUT WANTED POSTERS.
WE CAN'T GO BACK TO THAT HOUSE.
...

BUT ALL FOUR OF US CAN WALK AGAIN.
EVERY-THING'S FINE.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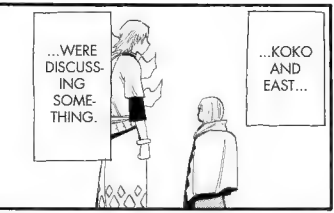

...WERE DISCUSSING SOMETHING.
...KOKO AND EAST...

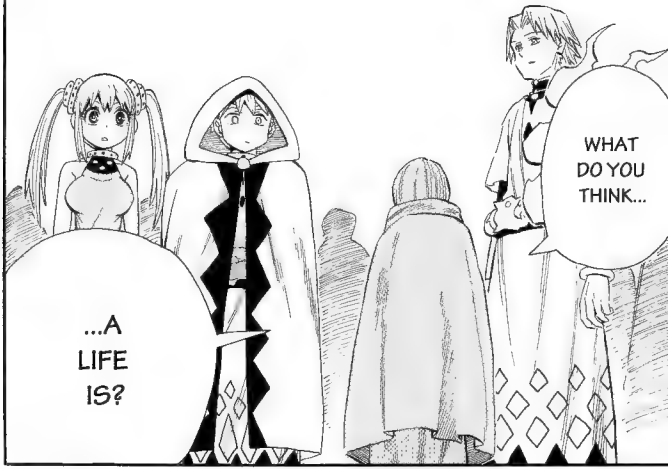
WE ARRIVED IN THE PORT TOWN
WHILE I ARRANGED TRANSPORTATION TO THE WESTERN CAPITAL...

WHEN I BROUGHT THEM THEIR SHIP TICKETS...
..KOKO SPOKE TO ME FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE WE LEFT THE HOUSE.
FORTUNA...

...

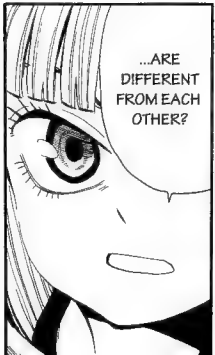
I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND. . .
...WHY SHE SAID IT.
HUH.
THAT TOWN'S SPIRIT FORGE EXPLOSION RESULTED IN TWENTY THOUSAND CASUALTIES.
I OVERHEARD SOME PEOPLE WALKING BY.
BUT THIS CONVERSATION...
FORTUNA, WHAT...
...
...DOWN DIFFERENT PATHS.
WHAT DO YOU THINK A LIFE IS?
...SET OUR DESTINIES...

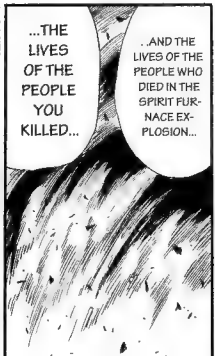
CIRCLE 37
FORTUNA 4


WHAT DO YOU THINK...
...A LIFE IS?

FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE...
...

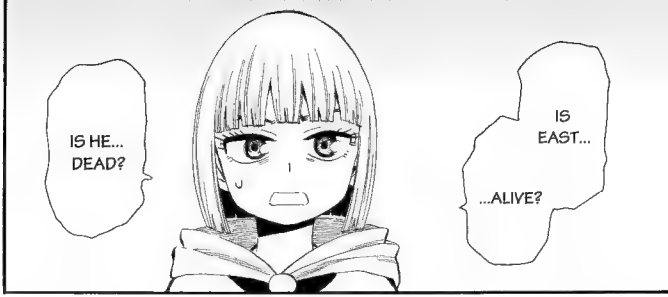
WHAT ABOUT IT, KOKO?
AN ENERGY SOURCE FOR BIOLOGICAL ACTIVITY.


...ARE DIFFERENT FROM EACH OTHER?


...THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE YOU KILLED...
...AND THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE WHO DIED IN THE SPIRIT FURNACE EXPLOSION...

...HOW IS IT THAT EAST'S LIFE...

OF COURSE, THAT'S BASED ON MY SUBJECTIVE STANDARDS.
THEIR LIVES ARE THE SAME.
BUT EAST'S EXISTENCE HAS MORE VALUE THAN THE OTHERS.
I...
BUT
...!!
DON'T YOU AGREE?
KOKO-CHAN...
...
LET'S GO.
THE SHIP'S LEAVING.
EAST IS BETTER NOW.
WHAT'S WRONG, KOKO?
...


IS HE... DEAD?
IS EAST...
...ALIVE?

LOOK.
HE'S RIGHT HERE.
HE'S ALIVE.

TELL ME!
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ALIVE?!
HE CAN'T BAKE BREAD!
WE CAN'T TOUCH HIM!
BUT HE'S A SPIRIT, RIGHT?!

WHAT ABOUT...
YEAH, BUT...
...DON'T YOU EVEN CARE?!
DON'T SHOUT.
RING
YOU NEVER WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TALK TO HIM AGAIN.
ARE YOU SAYING YOU'D RATHER EAST HAVE DIED FROM HIS ILLNESS?

CARE?
ABOUT WHAT?
KOKO...
SHMM
I, KOKO, CARVE MY SPIRIT INTO THIS SPIRIT CIRCLE!!
I POSSESS THEE THROUGH UNIFICA-TION!!
GRAB
!!
?!
MERGING SPIRITS?!
IF YOU DO THAT--!!

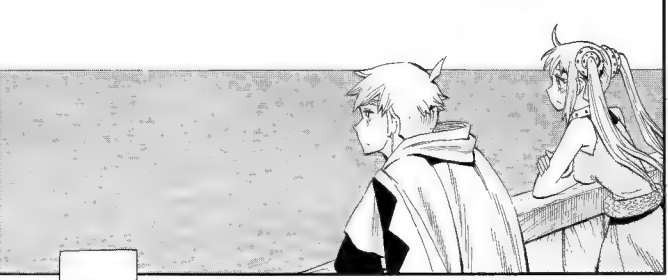
WHAT?!
HAA
DASH
I'M TAKING THIS!!
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE THIS!!
...THE MAN WHO BLEW UP THE SPIRIT FURNACES, IS RIGHT HERE!!
HEY!!
FOR-TUNA...

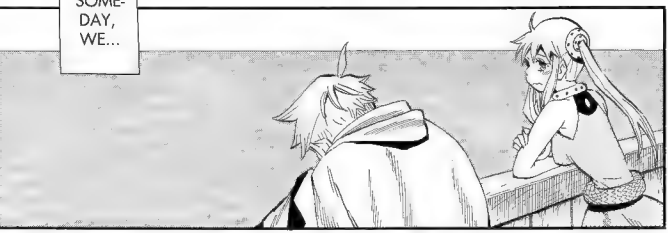
KOKO?!
EAST, COME WITH ME!!
RUNE, I'M SORRY!!
KOKO-CHAN?!
HE BLEW UP THE FURNACE.
YOU MEAN THAT EXPLOSION?
DASH!!
FOR-TUNA?
WHAT?
FORTUNA, YOU SHOULDN'T STUDY SPIRITS!!
HUH?
WHAT?
LET'S RUN FOR IT, RUNE!!
THE MAN WHO BLEW UP THE NORTHERN INDUSTRIAL TOWN IS HERE!!
GUARDS!!
FOR-TUNA ...!!
EAST ...!!

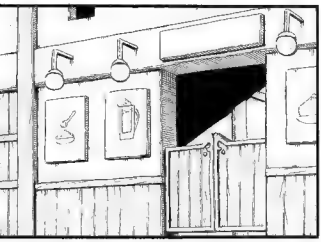
RUNE, DO IT!!
WHAT? BUT...
DO IT!!
YOU'RE FORTUNA-SAN?
COULD YOU COME WITH US?
!!
HI-YAH!!
WHOOSH
FWOOM
?!

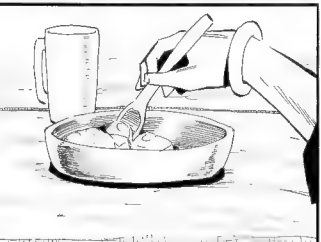
BACK...
GOTTA GET BACK.
MY BODY?!
WHA...
HUH?
THEY DON'T RECOGNIZE MY FACE.
AFTER TAKING A DETOUR, WE'LL OPENLY BOARD THE SHIP.
WHAT?!
HUH? JUST NOW...
WHAT ARE WE DOING?

AND SO, THE FOUR OF US...
...WENT OUR SEPARATE WAYS.




SOME-
DAY,
WE...





THE
EASTERN
CAPITAL

DID YOU HEAR?
THE SPIRIT FURNACE AT THE SOUTHERN MOUNTAIN TOWN EXPLODED.
AGAIN?
THERE WAS A SIMILAR INCIDENT ACROSS THE SEA AT THE NORTHERN INDUSTRIAL TOWN THE OTHER DAY.

THAT MONSTER FORTUNA APPEARED.
...
HE'S A HUGE DUDE WITH TATTOOS ON HIS FACE, RIGHT?
SO SCARY.
WHAT?
I THOUGHT SHE WAS A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.
HM?

THE WANTED POSTERS THE GUARDS HANDED OUT SHOWED A MAN WITH A NASTY LOOK IN HIS EYES.
I HEARD SHE'S AN OLD WOMAN, OVER A HUNDRED YEARS OLD.
WHAT?
NONE OF US AGREE.
THANKS FOR THE FOOD.
SURE THING.

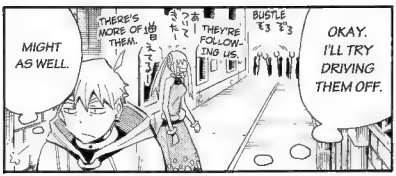
IT'S PROBABLY FORTUNA.
BUT LATELY THEY'RE BEGINNING TO DOUBT IT.
SOMEONE FROM FORTUNA'S TOWN HELPED COME UP WITH A SKETCH.
RUMOR SAYS SOMEONE'S BEEN SPREADING ALL KINDS OF DESCRIPTIONS AROUND TO MANIPULATE THE GUARDS' INFORMATION.
SHE'S RIGHT.
REALLY?

DURING OUR STAY HERE.
WE SPREAD WEIRD RUMORS AND VISITED THE LIBRARY...
JUMP
MASTER!!

AFTER PARTING WITH KOKO AND EAST, RUNE AND I CROSSED THE SEA TO THE EASTERN CAPITAL.
IS THIS THE END...?

ALSO, THEY WERE HANDING OUT PAPERS AND TALKING ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT THE DESCRIPTION OF FORTUNA WAS REAL OR SOMETHING.
THEY FINALLY FOUND OUT.
ハーナ
BE MORE SPECIFIC.
HOW'D IT GO?
THANKS FOR KEEPING WATCH.
THERE ARE LOTS OF GUARDS AROUND THE LIBRARY TODAY.

GLANCE
WE JUST MADE EYE CONTACT.
OH.
SHIT.
THEY WERE THERE WHEN I WENT TO THE GUARDHOUSE.
THOSE PEOPLE LOOKING OUR WAY AND TALKING ARE IN PLAIN CLOTHES, BUT THEY'RE GUARDS.


MIGHT AS WELL.
THERE'S MORE OF THEM.
THEY'RE FOLLOWING US.
BUSTLE
OKAY. I'LL TRY DRIVING THEM OFF.

RUN...
TURN
NO, I CAN'T. HMM.

I CAN THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE AFTER THAT.
IT'S A GOOD OPPORTUNITY...
...TO TEST OUT MY FRESHLY-CHARGED SECOND SPIRIT CIRCLE.

...AND ATTEMPTING TO MANIPULATE YOUR OWN DESCRIPTION, YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!!
FOR THE CRIMES OF DETONATING TWO SPIRIT FORGES...
SPIRIT SCHOLAR FORTUNA!!
ZZSSHHH
COME QUIETLY!!
THERE'S A CLIFF BEHIND YOU!!
SHOOM
HOW DARE YOU RUN INTO A GRAVE-YARD!!
SHFF...

CRACKLE
ARREST ME?
GRUMBLE
ボコ

?!

あ
AAARGH
あ
EEK?!
AH...
AAAAAHHH?!
あ

CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
TRY ME.

CALL REINFORCE-MENTS!! GET MORE PEOPLE!!
AAAH!!
ARGH
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?!
ああ
THE BONES!!
THE BONES!!
あ
あAAAAAAAAA

NOW I DON'T NEED TO SNEAK AROUND ANY-MORE.
MY INSTANT UNDEAD WARRIORS...
...ARE SUR-PRISINGLY STRONG.
あ
AAAH
ああ
AAAH
ああ
AAARGH
うわあ
AAARGH

THEN I CAN READ ALL I WANT AT THE LIBRARY.
I KNOW!! MAYBE I'LL CONQUER THE EASTERN CAPITAL.

THESE WILL BE-COME POWER-FUL UNDEAD WARRIORS.
THEY EVEN HAVE WEAPONS.
うわあ
AAARGH
ああああ
AH, FRESH CORPSES.

I'VE MADE UP MY MIND!!
すた
STEP
WHOOPS
GOOD, GOOD.

...BUT I DON'T THINK KOKO-CHAN WOULD LIKE THIS.
I...
...DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND LIFE OR WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ALIVE...

CON-QUERING THE CITY WAS EASY.
EVERY SOLDIER I KILLED WAS ANOTHER UNDEAD WARRIOR IN MY ARMY.

I'LL GIVE YOU SOME OF THE SOLDIERS' SPIRIT MATTER.
IT WILL MAKE YOU STRONGER.
ANYWAY, COME HERE, RUNE.
DID YOU SAY SOME-THING?
?

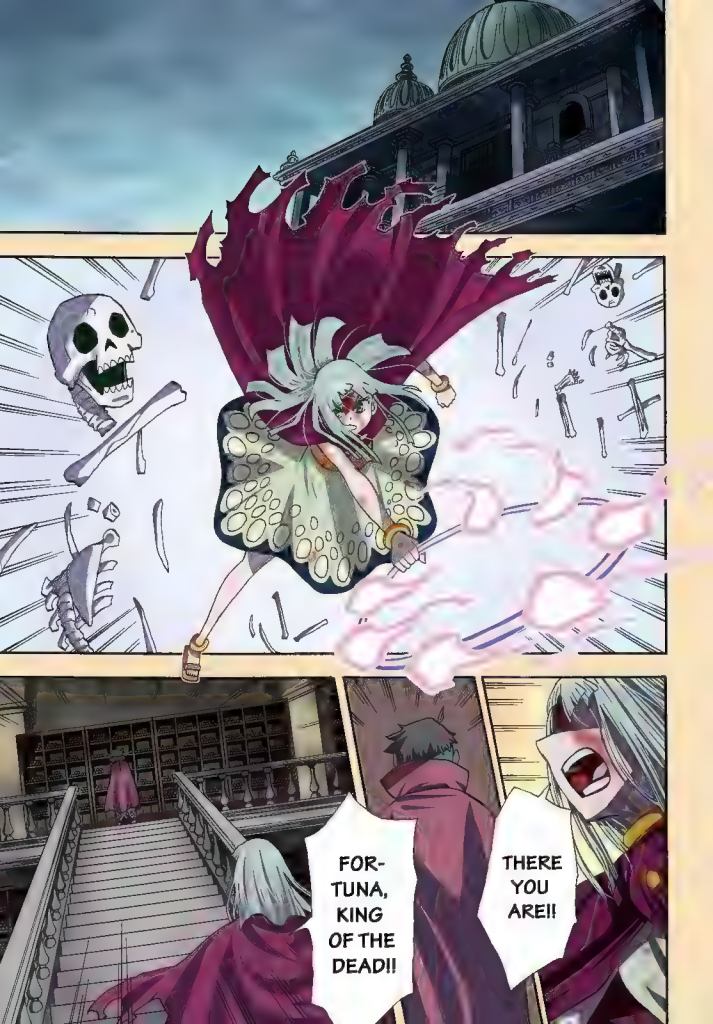
I HAVE NO IDEA HOW LONG I SPENT THERE.
.. AND LIVED A CAREFREE LIFE.
I ESTAB-LISHED MY HEAD-QUARTERS IN THE LIBRARY...

FORTUNA, KING OF THE DEAD!!

UNTIL ONE DAY...
CRASH
THERE YOU ARE!!
RATTLE RATTLE

WHEN *SHE* CALLED ME THAT...
...I REALIZED FOR THE FIRST TIME...

YOU'VE GROWN.
...THAT YEARS HAD PASSED.
AND YOU'VE GROWN OLD.


THERE YOU ARE!!
FOR-TUNA, KING OF THE DEAD!!

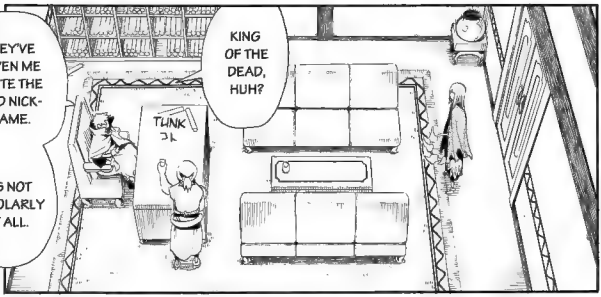
CIRCLE 36
FORTUNE 6

YOU'VE GROWN...
AND YOU'VE GROWN OLD...

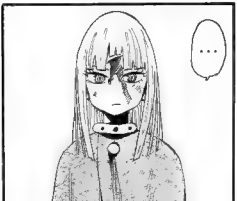
STEP
I MADE IT INTO THE CITY COUNTLESS TIMES ONLY TO FLEE AFTER FIGHTING YOUR REANIMATED SOLDIERS...
IT TOOK A WHILE TO GET HERE.
LONG TIME, NO SEE.
I'M IMPRESSED YOU MADE IT HERE.
YOU'RE A MESS.

COME THIS WAY, KOKO.
...

STEP BACK. SHE'S MY GUEST.
I SEE. I DIDN'T NOTICE WHAT WAS HAPPENING OUTSIDE.
RATTLE
RATTLE

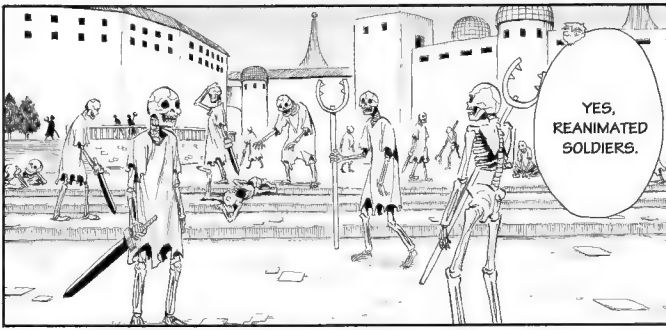

KING OF THE DEAD, HUH?
THEY'VE GIVEN ME QUITE THE ODD NICKNAME.
IT'S NOT SCHOLARLY AT ALL.
THINK

HAVE A SEAT.
MA'AM, HAVE WE GOT A MEDICAL KIT?
I'LL GO LOOK FOR ONE.


...

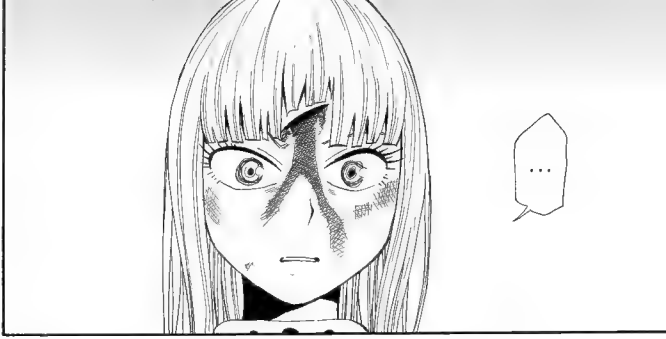
WHO WAS THAT?
GIVE US A MOMENT.
WE'LL TREAT YOU SOON.
...
KA-CHAK

ASIDE FROM THOSE HUMANS, EVERYONE ELSE IS...
SHE'S ONE OF SEVERAL HUNDRED PEOPLE I'VE KEPT ALIVE TO MANAGE THE CITY.
CREAK
HM? THE FORMER CAFETERIA LADY.
SHE COOKS FOR ME.


YES, REANIMATED SOLDIERS.

...50 THOU-SAND...
BEFORE IT BECAME THE CITY OF THE DEAD, THE WESTERN CAPITAL'S POPULATION WAS...

WHERE'S RUNE?
HE'S WAITING OUTSIDE THE CITY.
I THOUGHT IT'D BE DANGEROUS TO BRING HIM SINCE HE'D INTERFERE WITH THE SOLDIERS.
IS HE WELL?
BY THE WAY, HOW'S EAST?
I WANT TO SEE RUNE, BUT WHY DO YOU WANT TO SEE EAST?
I'LL CALL RUNE.
I'LL TELL THE SOLDIERS TO RELAX THEIR GUARD, SO SUMMON EAST.
AT THIS HOUR, SHE SHOULD BE OUT LOOKING AT THE OCEAN.
...
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SIT?
I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU, TOO, OF COURSE.
YOU'VE GROWN INTO A BEAUTY.
I JUST WANT TO SEE HIM.
THE FOUR OF US CAN LIVE TOGETHER AGAIN.
YEAH?
WELL? WHY DON'T YOU LIVE HERE WITH ME?

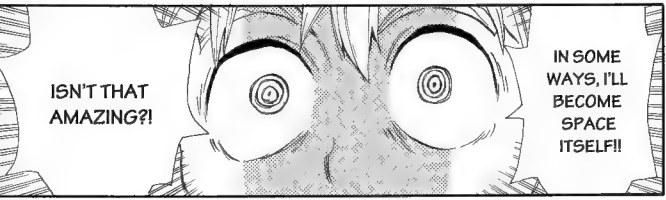

...

IT HAS SLABS THAT PROJECT IMAGES IN MID-AIR!!
THERE'S SO MUCH I WANT TO TELL YOU!! THIS PLACE IS AMAZING!!
THE MORE RECORDS OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATION I READ, THE MORE SURPRISES I FIND!!
THERE'S A HIDDEN UNDERGROUND LIBRARY, AND IT'S GOT MORE THAN JUST SCROLLS.

ABOUT WHAT?
?
THE ANCIENT CIVILIZATION'S...
IT WASN'T NATURALLY FORMED AT ALL!!
IT'S INCREDIBLE HOW THAT FAMOUS TOURIST SPOT, THE BASIN OF DARKNESS, WAS FORMED!!
YOU DON'T REGRET ANYTHING...
...

OH, RIGHT!! I HAD A GREAT IDEA!!
YOU CAN'T LEARN EVERYTHING FROM JUST TEXT, RIGHT?
SO I'VE BEEN THINKING OF HOW I CAN FREELY TRAVEL TO OTHER WORLDS!!
IT TAKES A LOT OF ENERGY, AND...

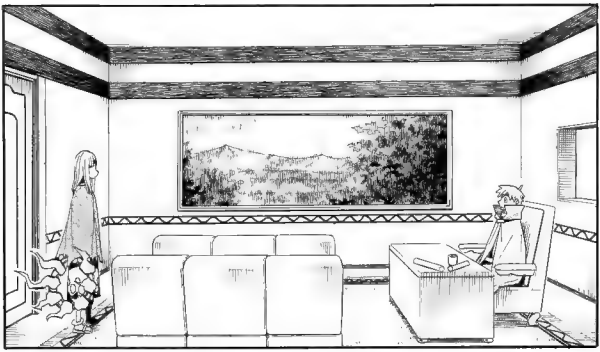
OTHER WORLDS?
FIRST, I'LL CAUSE A MAJOR INCIDENT TO CATCH THE WORLD'S ATTENTION!
THAT WILL GATHER A BUNCH OF SPIRIT DIMENSION OBSERVATION POINTS AT SPECIFIC POINTS IN SPACE-TIME! NOT PHYSICAL, BUT MENTAL!
I'LL USE THE CIRCLE TO CHANGE THEIR DIRECTIONALITY INTO NON-DIRECTIONALITY! SINCE THAT CONSUMES THE ENERGY REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN A UNIVERSE, "HERE" WILL DISAPPEAR...
...BUT IT WILL TURN MY CONSCIOUSNESS INTO DIRECTIONALITY ITSELF! IT WILL ALLOW ME TO FREELY TRAVERSE WORLDS OF OTHER POSSIBILITIES AND SPACE-TIME VALUES!!


IN SOME WAYS, I'LL BECOME SPACE ITSELF!!
ISN'T THAT AMAZING?!

I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
...ANYTHING YOU'RE SAYING.

THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.
I'M NOT GOING TO LIVE WITH YOU...
...BECAUSE YOU'RE GOING TO DIE HERE.

WELL, ONCE WE START LIVING TOGETHER, I CAN TEACH YOU...
HAVE YOU NOT HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY SPIRITS SINCE THEN?



BECAUSE I'M GOING TO KILL YOU!!

WHY?
?

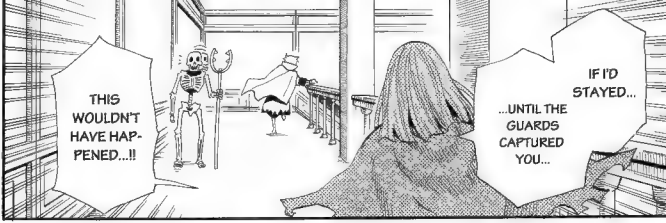
SOUL DISPER-SION!!
FWOOSH
RETURN TO THE LIGHT!!
WHOA?!
GLATTER
WAIT, WAIT, WAIT!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
CITIZENS OF THE NORTHERN INDUSTRIAL CITY?! THE SOUTHERN MOUNTAIN CITY?!
AND THE WESTERN CAPITAL WILL BE AVENGED!!
A-AVENGED?!
DID YOU KNOW SOME OF THEM?!

THAT'S NOT THE PROB-LEM!!
BAM

FOR-TUNA!!
DASH
FWOOSH
WHOA!

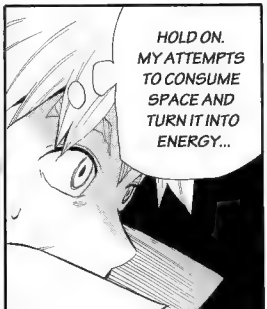
REANI-MATED SOL-DIERS!!
STOP!!
DASH

I FOUND THE MEDICAL KIT...
RUN, WOMAN!! OUR GUEST HAS LOST HER MIND!!
WHOCK
HMPH!!
WHAAAT?!
WHAT?!
WHAT?!
DODGE
I'M AN OUTSIDER WHO CAME TO DEFEAT THE KING OF THE DEAD!!
I'M HERE TO SAVE YOU!!
DASH
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S LOST HIS MIND!!
IF I HADN'T RUN AWAY WHEN WE PARTED WAYS AT THE HARBOR...
IF I'D CLUNG TO YOU AND KEPT SHOUTING...
WHAT?!
DASH
DASH
I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SOUL FURNACE EXPLOSION...
...IN THE SOUTHERN MOUNTAIN CITY, AND THE WESTERN CAPITAL'S TRANSFORMATION INTO THE CITY OF THE DEAD!!


THIS WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED...!!
IF I'D STAYED...
...UNTIL THE GUARDS CAPTURED YOU...

YOU WOULD NEVER...
...HAVE BECOME THE ENEMY OF HUMANKIND!!

EVENTUALLY..


HOLD ON. MY ATTEMPTS TO CONSUME SPACE AND TURN IT INTO ENERGY...

YOU'RE EXAGGERATING!
THE ENEMY OF HUMANKIND?

LEARNING IS DANGEROUS FOR YOU.
DID YOU NOT HAVE ANY DOUBTS OR HESITATION?
THE IDEA ITSELF IS DANGEROUS.
EVENTUALLY...
...THEY BECOME HEARTLESS MADMEN.

CREAK

AH...
AH!!

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S LOST HIS MIND!!

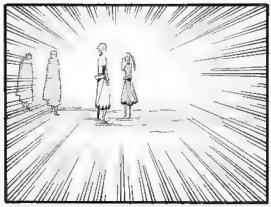
THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO STRAY FROM THE PATH!!
I SEE NOW.

REANI-MATED SOLDIERS, TO ME!! FORMA-TION D!!
ROLL
ROLL
YAAAAH!!
THUD
?!
FORTUNA-SAN, WATCH OUT!!

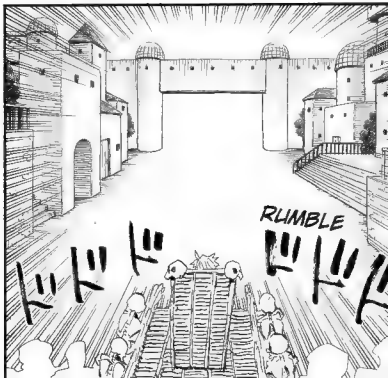
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
YAH!
FOR-MATION D?!
THE D IS FOR "DEPAR-TURE."
BANG
EMERGENCY DEPARTURE FORMATION!! BONE PALANQUIN!!
UGH!
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
RUN, SKELE-TONS!!
YOU WON'T ES-CAPE!!
I'M LEAVING THIS CITY!!
LATER, OLD WOMAN!! THANKS FOR EVERYTHING!!
...

500 SOLDIERS, CARRY THE WRITINGS!!
BRING AS MANY AS YOU CAN!!
300 SOLDIERS, STOP MY PURSUER!! DON'T KILL THE GIRL!!
RUMBLE

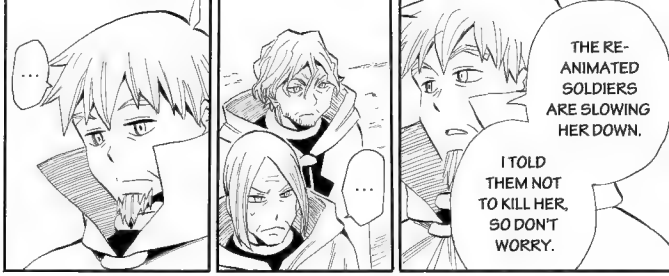
WE'LL HEAD FOR THE BASIN OF DARKNESS AND CAPTURE THE TOURIST TOWN THERE!!
EVERYONE ELSE, HEAD EAST!!

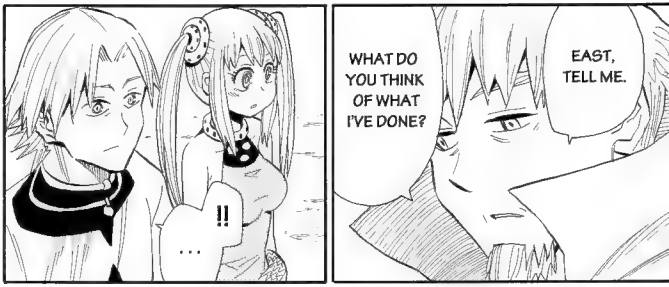


RUMBLE
!


RUMBLE

SKELE-TONS, STOP!!
EAST!! RUNE!!
SKID
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, EAST.
THERE YOU ARE, RUNE.
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED.
KOKO SAID THE SAME THING
HELLO, FOR-TUNA...
MAS-TER.
YOU'VE GOTTEN OLD.
I SEE. THANKS FOR TAKING CARE OF KOKO.
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO KOKO?!
KING OF THE DEAD ...!!
...? WHO ARE THEY?
THEY RAISED KOKO. THEY'RE OUR FRIENDS.
SPIRIT SCHOLARS WE MET AT THE HARBOR WHERE WE PARTED WAYS.


...
...
THE RE-ANIMATED SOLDIERS ARE SLOWING HER DOWN.
I TOLD THEM NOT TO KILL HER, SO DON'T WORRY.

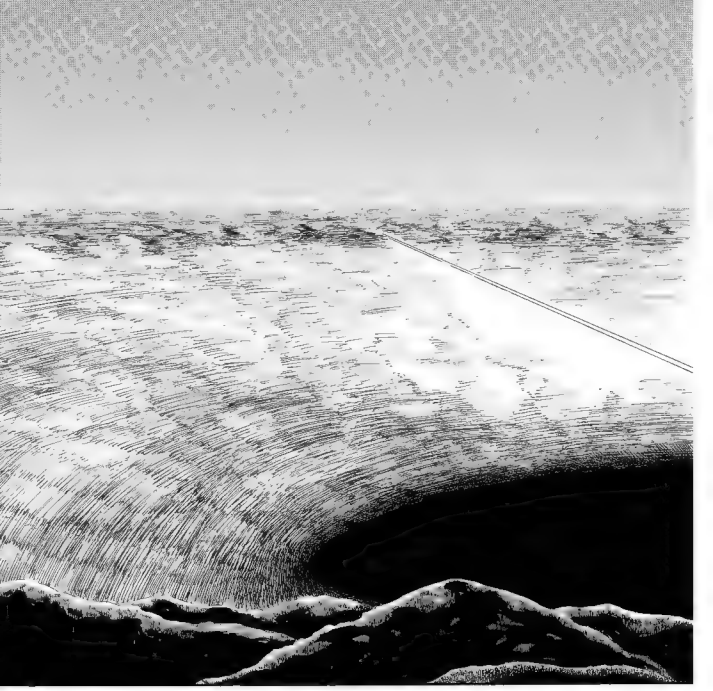

!!
...
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF WHAT I'VE DONE?
EAST, TELL ME.

I COULD NEVER HATE YOU. I ALWAYS LOOKED UP TO YOU...
BUT A LOT PEOPLE DIED FOR ME, AND KOKO IS DISTRESSED...
THE THINGS YOU DID LATER...
DO YOU HATE ME, TOO?
HAVE YOU COME TO KILL THE KING OF THE DEAD?

THEY ONLY MAKE ME FEEL...
...SAD AND DISAP-POINTED.
LET'S GO, RUNE.
SEE YOU LATER...
..EAST.
MY "SOME-DAY"... ...NEVER CAME TRUE.
WE COULD NEVER GO BACK TO HOW WE WERE.

THE BASIN OF DARK-NESS

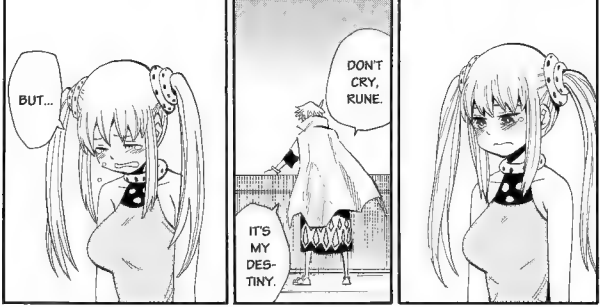
WHO KNEW THIS WAS THE POWER OF ANCIENT WEAPONS...
WHAT A VIEW.



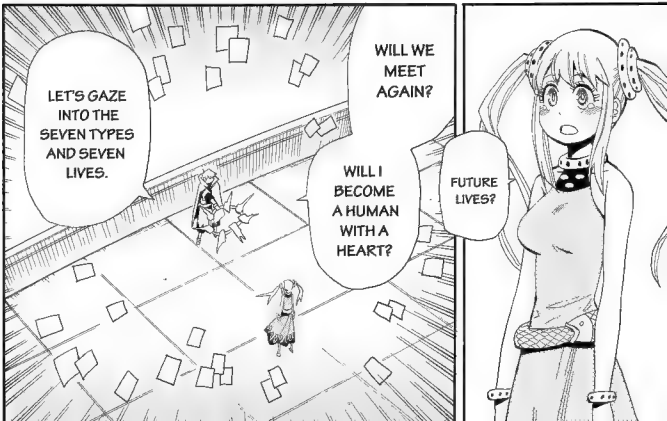
I SUPPOSE IT'S TOO OLD...
BUT NO SPIRIT MATTER REMAINS.

MAS-
TER...
WILL WE EVER SEE KOKO-CHAN AND EAST-SAN AGAIN?
I SUP-
POSE
NOT.
I
DOUBT
WE
WILL...
APPAR-
ENTLY
I'M NOT
SANE.
NO ONE
UNDER-
STANDS
ME.
WHEN KOKO
CAME TO KILL
ME, I FINALLY
UNDERSTOOD.
I'VE BECOME
ONE OF THE
"HEARTLESS
MADMEN"
MY MASTER
SPOKE OF...
MY
MASTER
WAS
RIGHT.
I DIDN'T
UNDER-
STAND
THE
SIGNIFI-
CANCE...
...OF WHAT
YOU HAD
DONE...
I THINK
I MIGHT BE
HEARTLESS
AS WELL.
BUT...

...FILLS ME...
...WITH SAD-NESS.
THE THOUGHT OF NEVER SEEING KOKO-CHAN AND EAST-SAN...
I CAN'T QUIT THESE "ATROCI-TIES."
I JUST CONQUERED THIS CITY.
BUT IT'S TOO LATE FOR THIS LIFE.
I UNDER-STAND THAT AS WELL.
I WAS BORN THIS WAY.
BUT IT'S GOOD TO UNDERSTAND WHO I AM.
...OF THIS WORLD!!
I WAS BORN TO EXPOSE THE SECRETS...
I AM A HEARTLESS MADMAN.


BUT...
DON'T CRY, RUNE.
IT'S MY DES-TINY.

I CALL THEM FUTURE LIVES, BUT THEY'RE NO MORE THAN INDIVIDUAL POINTS IN OTHER WORLDS WITH OTHER POSSIBILITIES AND SPACE-TIME VALUES. IF YOU FOLLOW THEIR INERTIA, THOUGH, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO SEE THE ONES THAT ARE VERY "CLOSE."
I KNOW, RUNE.
IF THERE'S NO HOPE FOR THIS LIFE, WHY NOT LOOK AT OUR FUTURE LIVES...
.. WITH THE SPIRIT CIRCLE?

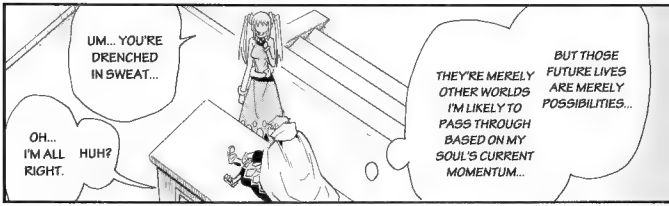

LET'S GAZE INTO THE SEVEN TYPES AND SEVEN LIVES.
WILL WE MEET AGAIN?
WILL I BECOME A HUMAN WITH A HEART?
FUTURE LIVES?

CIRCLE 39
FORTUNA 6

KAPOWWW

MAS-
TER...?
WERE YOU ABLE TO SEE YOUR FUTURE LIVES?
DID WE... MEET AGAIN...?
WE DID...
BUT...
IN MY SEVENTH FUTURE LIFE, I...

MAS-
TER...?
...AND
MY CYCLE
OF REBIRTH
IS DISCON-
TINUED!
MY SEVENTH
FUTURE LIFE,
I'M DEFEATED
BY KOKO...


UM... YOU'RE
DRENCHED
IN SWEAT...
OH...
I'M ALL
RIGHT.
HUH?
THEY'RE MERELY
OTHER WORLDS
I'M LIKELY TO
PASS THROUGH
BASED ON MY
SOUL'S CURRENT
MOMENTUM...
BUT THOSE
FUTURE LIVES
ARE MERELY
POSSIBILITIES...

BUT NOW I KNOW
THE DETAILS OF
MY OWN LIFE...
NO, WAIT. IT'S
STILL ONLY ONE
OF COUNTLESS
OTHER WORLDS...
IT'S NOT NEC-
ESSARILY...
BECAUSE SO MUCH
WAS FUZZY, WE
MANAGED TO AVOID
THE ENDLESS HELL OF
CONSUMING EACH
OTHER'S SUBJECTIVE
VIEWS...
AND THE FACT
THAT THE FUUTA I SAW
WAS LOOKING
BACK ON ME,
FORTUNA,
COMPLICATES
THINGS, TOO...

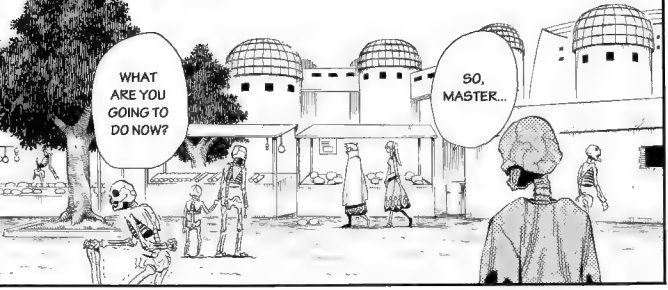
SO
THEN...
...WHY
ARE YOU
MAKING
THAT
FACE?
WHAT'S
WRONG?
WE GOT TO
SEE KOKO-
CHAN AND
EAST-SAN
AGAIN,
RIGHT?

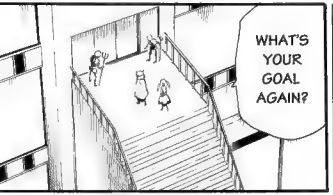
FUUTA IS THE KEY...
I'M JUST A BIT TIRED.
I SUMMONED RUNE AGAIN AND ACQUIRED THE CIRCLE...
AND EAST, WHO IS WITH THE CIRCLE, HAS MANIFESTED AT THE SAME COORDINATES...
SHE MANAGED TO EXTRACT THE SPIRIT CIRCLE FUSED WITH HER OWN SPIRITUAL DIMENSION.
IN THE SEVENTH FUTURE LIFE, KOKO REGAINED HER CURRENT MEMORIES.
...WERE PRESENT.
...MEANING ALL FOUR OF US...
IN OUR FINAL BATTLE, I WAS BEATEN...
...AND KILLED.
BUT KOKO, WHO HAD REGAINED HER PAST MEMORIES, COULDN'T FORGIVE ME...

MAS-
TER.
RUSTLE

DON'T WORRY. WE'LL DEFINITELY SEE THEM.
YOU CAN LOOK FORWARD TO IT.

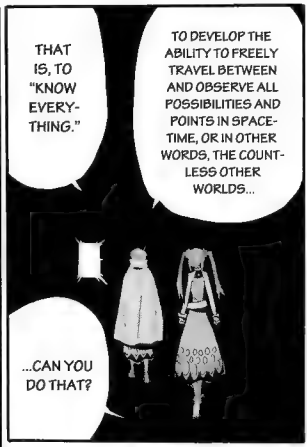
OKAY!!


WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?
SO, MASTER...


WHAT'S YOUR GOAL AGAIN?

SINCE I HAVE A GOAL, I'LL WORK ON THAT.
NOW THEN... AFTER THIS, THE FORTUNA WHO FUUTA SAW...

THEN OMNISCIENCE WILL BE JUST THE FIRST STEP. I'LL BE ABLE TO CREATE FREELY AS WELL.
I WILL CONSUME THIS UNI-VERSE AND BECOME A NEW ONE.
WHO DO YOU THINK I AM?
I WILL EVEN CREATE A NEW SPIRITUAL DIMENSION AND MAKE YOU HUMAN.


THAT IS, TO "KNOW EVERY-THING."
TO DEVELOP THE ABILITY TO FREELY TRAVEL BETWEEN AND OBSERVE ALL POSSIBILITIES AND POINTS IN SPACE-TIME, OR IN OTHER WORDS, THE COUNT-LESS OTHER WORLDS...
...CAN YOU DO THAT?

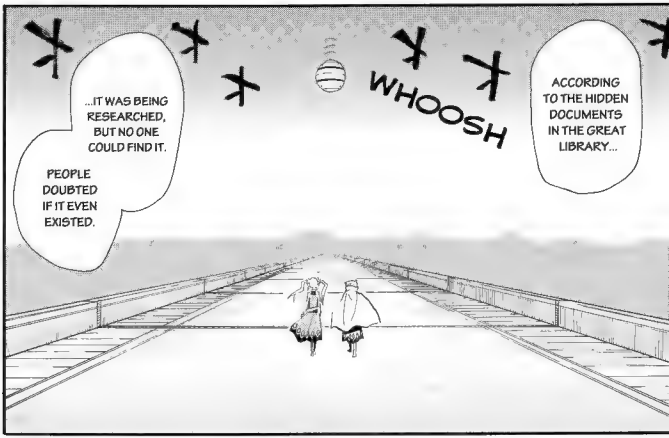
ANSWER ME, ARIONE!!

WHOOSH
MAKE ME...
...HU-MAN...

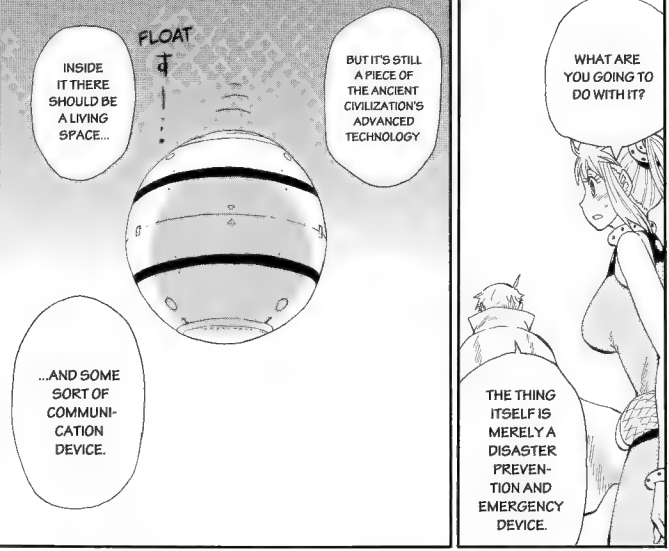
WHOOSH
TO DO THAT...
. FIRST WE NEED TO DO RE-SEARCH.

I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE!!
ぐにゃり
SKWOOSH
SHIMMER

"THE SUBSPACE SHELTER."
A RELIC OF AN ANCIENT CIVILIZATION.
WHAT IS IT...?
THAT THING...


WHOOSH
...IT WAS BEING RESEARCHED, BUT NO ONE COULD FIND IT.
PEOPLE DOUBTED IF IT EVEN EXISTED.
ACCORDING TO THE HIDDEN DOCUMENTS IN THE GREAT LIBRARY...

AT THE VERY LEAST, THOSE WHO DIDN'T SUPPORT THEM CALLED THEM "ARION."
IT'S NOT MUCH OF A DIFFERENCE, BUT THEY WERE DEAD SERIOUS.
THE NAME PASSED DOWN BY THE PEOPLE OF THE TIME WAS "ARION."
THE ANCIENT ANTI-SOCIAL ORGANIZATION WAS CALLED "ARIONE."
THE NAME THAT HAD BEEN PASSED DOWN WAS WRONG.

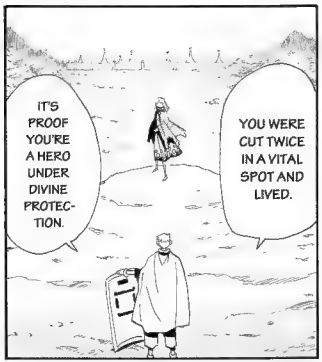

FLOAT
INSIDE IT THERE SHOULD BE A LIVING SPACE...
BUT IT'S STILL A PIECE OF THE ANCIENT CIVILIZATION'S ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY
...AND SOME SORT OF COMMUNI-CATION DEVICE.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH IT?
THE THING ITSELF IS MERELY A DISASTER PREVEN-TION AND EMERGENCY DEVICE.

A MESSAGE, HUH?
WHAT KIND...?
HOW ABOUT THIS?
WELL...
...AND HAVE THEM SEND A MESSAGE FROM ME TO AS MANY CITIES AS POSSIBLE.
I WILL INVES-TIGATE THEM THOROUGHLY..

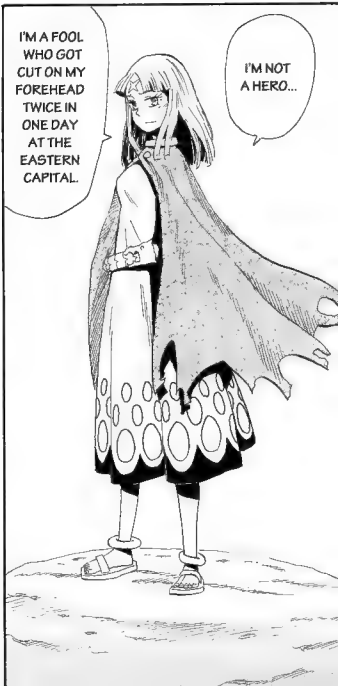
FROM THE KING OF THE DEAD TO HUMANITY.
THIS IS A DECLARATION OF WAR.
RESIST ME.
OTHERWISE, I'LL TURN OUR ENTIRE CIVILIZATION INTO CITIES OF THE DEAD.

RESIST ME.
...I'LL TURN OUR ENTIRE CIVILIZATION...
OTHER-WISE...
...INTO CITIES OF THE DEAD.

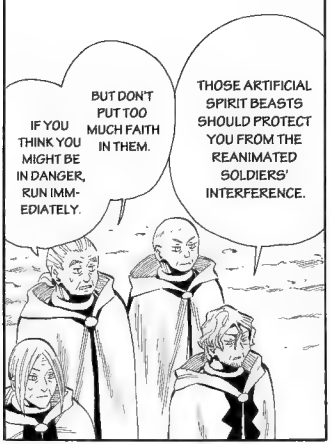
WHOOOSH
KOKO, HERO WHO LIBERATED THE EASTERN CAPITAL...
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN FIGHT THE REANIMATED SOLDIERS.
THE FATE OF HUMANKIND IS IN YOUR HANDS.


YOU WERE CUT TWICE IN A VITAL SPOT AND LIVED.
IT'S PROOF YOU'RE A HERO UNDER DIVINE PROTEC-TION.

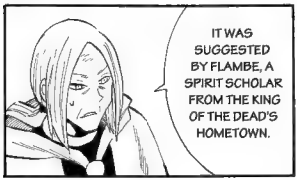
WE'VE CARVED YOUR SCAR ONTO OUR SOLDIERS' HELMETS...
...AS A SYMBOL OF A TRUE WARRIOR.


I'M NOT A HERO...
I'M A FOOL WHO GOT CUT ON MY FOREHEAD TWICE IN ONE DAY AT THE EASTERN CAPITAL.

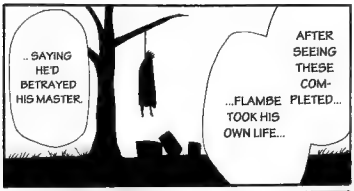
...AND ESCORT YOU TO THE KING OF THE DEAD!!
WE WILL BE YOUR SHIELD...
...YOU MUST RUN AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE...
...WITHOUT LOOKING BACK!!
EVEN IF WE FALL...
EAST-KUN...
...FOR YOUR ASSIS-TANCE!!
THANK YOU...


THOSE ARTIFICIAL SPIRIT BEASTS SHOULD PROTECT YOU FROM THE REANIMATED SOLDIERS' INTERFERENCE.
BUT DON'T PUT TOO MUCH FAITH IN THEM.
IF YOU THINK YOU MIGHT BE IN DANGER, RUN IMMEDIATELY.

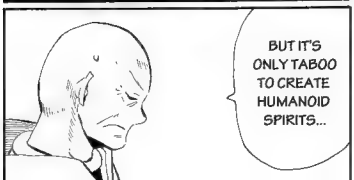
YES.


IT WAS SUGGESTED BY FLAMBE, A SPIRIT SCHOLAR FROM THE KING OF THE DEAD'S HOMETOWN.

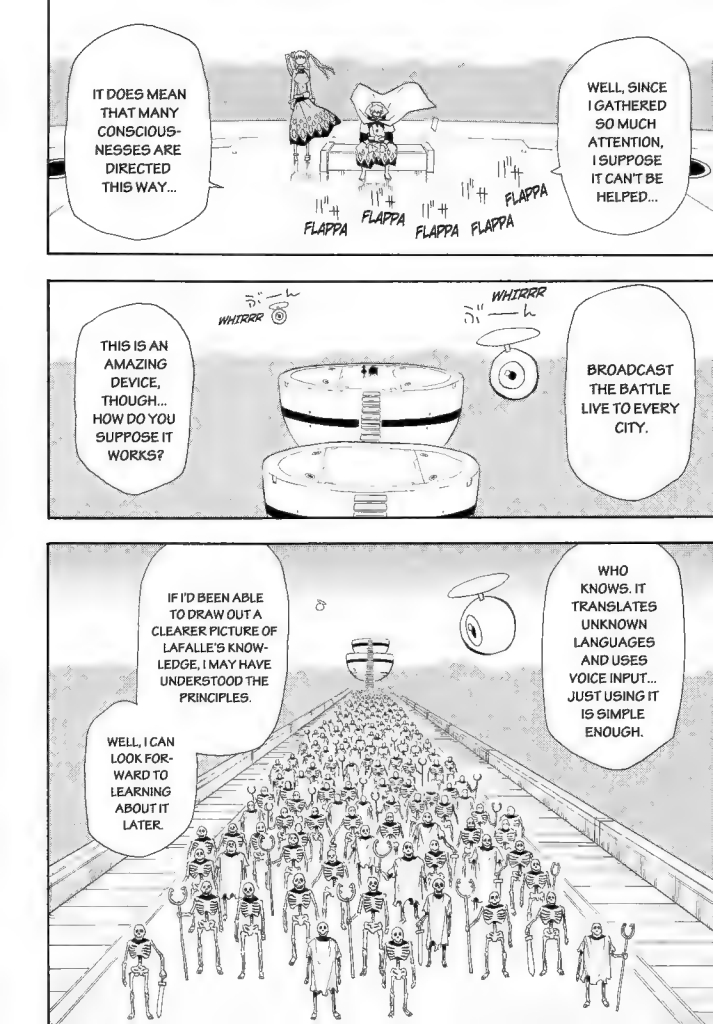
I KNOW.
BUT THE IDEA TO MAKE ARTIFICIAL SPIRIT BEASTS WHEN IT'S TABOO...


...SAYING HE'D BETRAYED HIS MASTER.
...FLAMBE TOOK HIS OWN LIFE...
AFTER SEEING THESE COMPLETED...

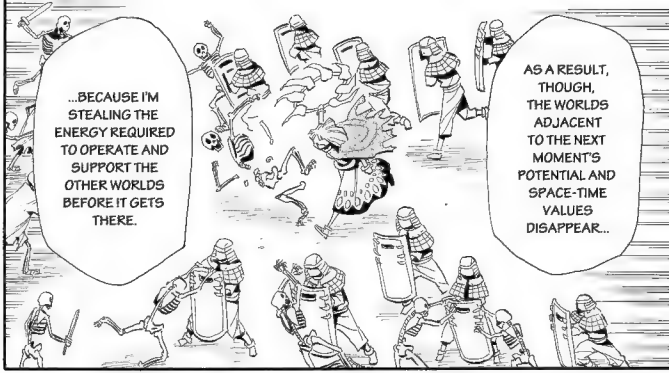
HE HEARD RUMORS WE WERE FIGHTING THE KING OF THE DEAD...
...AND OFFERED HIS ASSISTANCE.


BUT IT'S ONLY TABOO TO CREATE HUMANOID SPIRITS...

I SEE... I HAD NO IDEA.
HE WAS FORTUNA'S SENIOR APPRENTICE.
HEY, THEY'RE FIGHTING AGAIN...
...I'M FROM HIS HOMETOWN AS WELL. I KNEW FLAMBE-SAN.
...!!
WHIRRR
WHIRRR
THEY'RE BRINGING UNNECESSARY ADDITIONS WITH THEM
AN ARMY CORPS AND ARTIFICIAL SPIRIT BEASTS..
RUSTLE
FLAPPA
FLAPPA FLAPPA
FLAPPA
FLAPPA
IF IT WERE JUST KOKO AND EAST, I WOULD HAVE HAD THE SKELETONS STAND IN LINE AND LET THEM THROUGH...


IT DOES MEAN THAT MANY CONSCIOUS-NESSES ARE DIRECTED THIS WAY...
FLAPPA
FLAPPA
FLAPPA
FLAPPA
FLAPPA
WELL, SINCE I GATHERED SO MUCH ATTENTION, I SUPPOSE IT CAN'T BE HELPED...
THIS IS AN AMAZING DEVICE, THOUGH... HOW DO YOU SUPPOSE IT WORKS?
WHIRRR
WHIRRR
BROADCAST THE BATTLE LIVE TO EVERY CITY.
WELL, I CAN LOOK FOR-WARD TO LEARNING ABOUT IT LATER.
IF I'D BEEN ABLE TO DRAW OUT A CLEARER PICTURE OF LAFALLE'S KNOW-LEDGE, I MAY HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE PRINCIPLES.
WHO KNOWS. IT TRANSLATES UNKNOWN LANGUAGES AND USES VOICE INPUT... JUST USING IT IS SIMPLE ENOUGH.

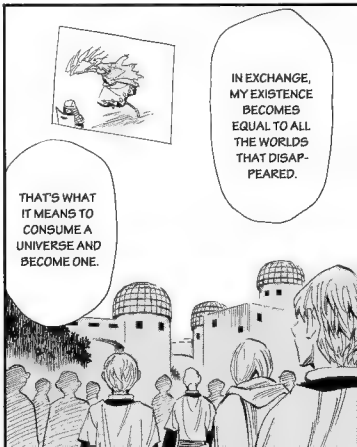
...GIVES BIRTH TO A DIRECTIVITY ENDING AT EITHER ME OR THIS INCIDENT.
THE SOULS AND SUBJECTIVE CONSCIOUS-NESSES IN THIS COORDINATE WORLD, IN OTHER WORDS, THE SPIRIT DIMENSION'S OBSERVATIONAL ENERGY...
...WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU GATHER ALL THIS ATTEN-TION?
BY THE WAY. .
IT'S A WAY TO GATHER A LARGE AMOUNT OF OTHER-WORLD MOBILITY ENERGY.
GET!!
BY HARVESTING THAT WITH THE SPIRIT CIRCLE, IT BECOMES NON-DIRECTIONAL.
HEE HEE
WELL...
...IT WOULD MAKE SENSE IF YOU WERE A LITTLE SMARTER. .
SINCE YOU'RE A PSEUDO-SPIRIT MADE FROM MY SPIRIT DIMEN-SION...
I KNOW I ASKED, BUT...
. . .
OOH.
WHIRRR ジーー
BASICALLY, THEIR ATTENTION AND HEAT BECOMES POWER.


...BECAUSE I'M STEALING THE ENERGY REQUIRED TO OPERATE AND SUPPORT THE OTHER WORLDS BEFORE IT GETS THERE.
AS A RESULT, THOUGH, THE WORLDS ADJACENT TO THE NEXT MOMENT'S POTENTIAL AND SPACE-TIME VALUES DISAPPEAR...

THEY...
.DISAP-PEAR...

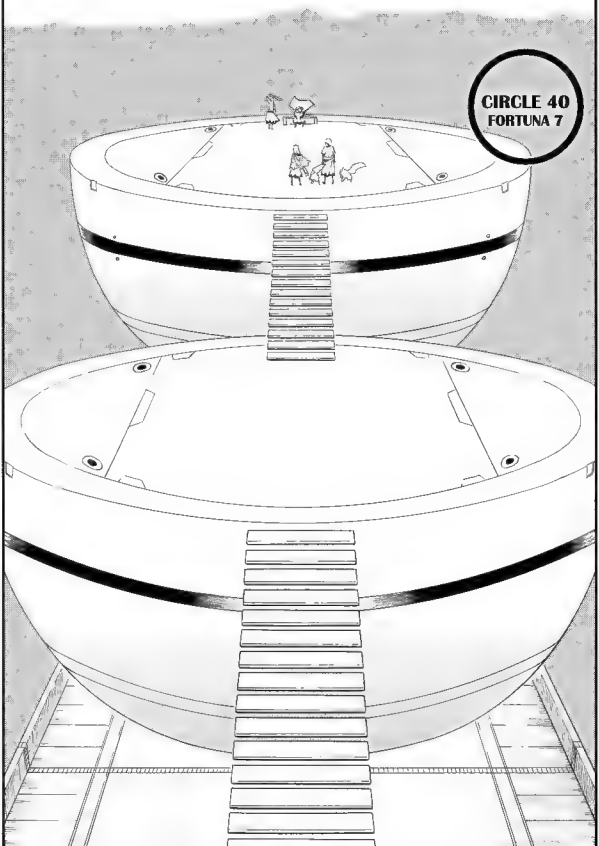
ISN'T THAT...
...A LITTLE TERRIFY-ING?

IT'S AMAZING, ISN'T IT?


IN EXCHANGE, MY EXISTENCE BECOMES EQUAL TO ALL THE WORLDS THAT DISAP-PEARED.
THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS TO CONSUME A UNIVERSE AND BECOME ONE.

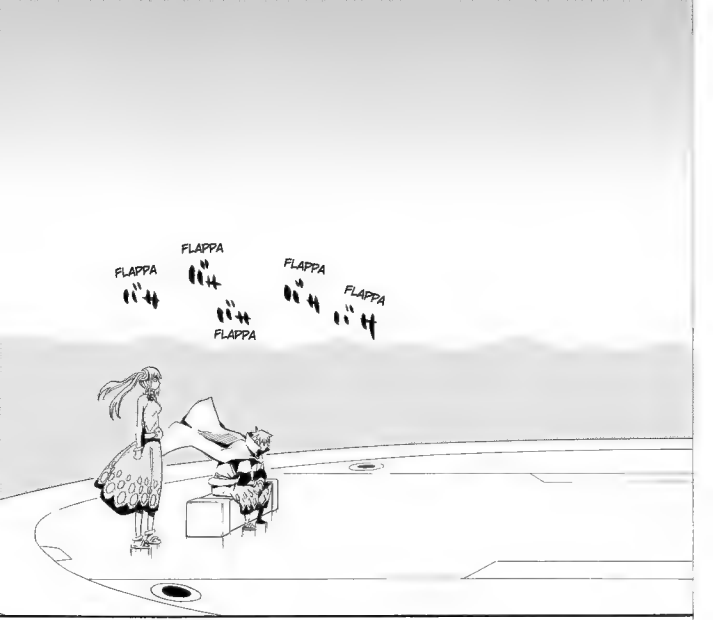
WITH THAT MUCH ENERGY, I COULD MAKE YOU HUMAN, RUNE.
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO ONCE YOU'RE HUMAN?
...I WANTED TO LIFT KOKO-CHAN WHEN SHE WAS LITTLE.
I WANTED TO TRY EAST-SAN'S BREAD.
I WANTED TO HELP YOU BY DOING THINGS OTHER THAN MEASURING SPIRIT MATERIAL.
YOU CAN DO ALL THOSE THINGS.
I CAN'T.

BECAUSE...
...THOSE MOMENTS HAVE ALREADY PASSED.
FLAPPA
FLAPPA
FLAPPA
FLAPPA
FLAPPA
FLAPPA
FLAPPA


CIRCLE 40
FORTUNA 7

FLAPPA
FLAPPA
FLAPPA
FLAPPA
FLAPPA

KING OF THE DEAD.
...WE'RE HERE TO KILL YOU.


FLAPPA
FLAPPA
FLAPPA
FLAPPA
FLAPPA

HERO.
...YEAH.
THANKS FOR COMING.

EAST-SAN...
KOKO-CHAN...
FOR-TUNA...
RUNE...
ASK WHAT?
BEFORE I KILL YOU, I WANT TO ASK.
MY GOAL LIES BEYOND THAT.
THIS IS ONE STEP ON THE WAY.
I NEVER THOUGHT YOU WERE THE TYPE OF MAN TO BE INTERESTED IN CONQUERING THE WORLD..
WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?

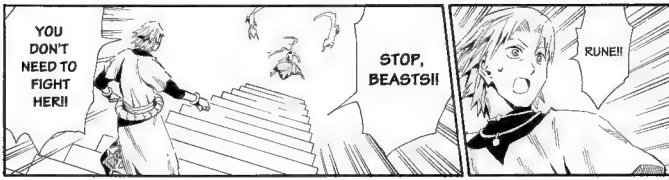
IS TRAMPLING ON THE SOULS OF COUNTLESS PEOPLE...
...FOR YOUR OWN BENEFIT YOUR GOAL ALONE?
WELL...
I'M PROBABLY THE ONLY ONE.
THERE WERE CHILDREN AMONG THE REANIMATED SOLDIERS.
I REANIMATED ALL THE CITY'S RESIDENTS. OF COURSE THERE WERE CHILDREN.
YOU SAW THEM IN THE EASTERN CAPITAL, DIDN'T YOU?
IN THE EASTERN CAPITAL, I DIDN'T... NO, MAYBE I PRETENDED NOT TO NOTICE.
...I'VE SEEN REANIMATED SOLDIERS OF CRAWLING BABIES, TOO.
YEAH.
I'M SURE THEY EXIST.
...AND?

KILLING YOU SEVEN TIMES ISN'T ENOUGH.
YOU FIEND.
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE

WHAT ABOUT IT?
FWOOM

HEY...
!!
ROAR!!
グアアア!!
GROWL!
ウウウ...
CRACKLE
"4"
GROWL...
DASH
RUNE!!
YES...
YES, SIR!!
I'M SORRY !!
KOKO-CHAN, EAST-SAN!
WHUD

SKIIID

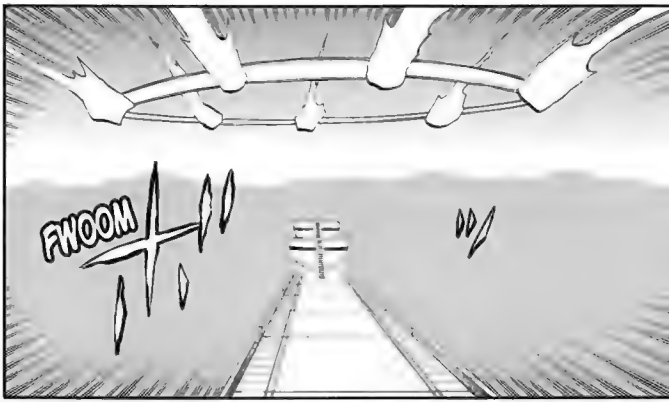

YOU DON'T NEED TO FIGHT HER!!
STOP, BEASTS!!
RUNE!!

NOW IT'S ONE-ON-ONE AGAINST THE KING OF THE DEAD.
SHOULD YOU BE TAKING YOUR EYES OFF ME...
...HERO?
EAST ...!!
RUNE ...!!

HEH HEH HEH...
...
CRACKLE
CRACKLE

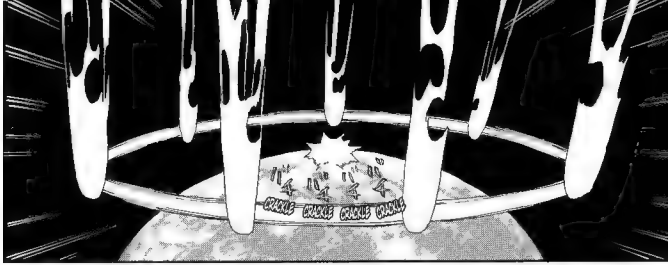
I HAD THEIR VICTIMS HELP MANAGE THE CITY.
WHILE TAKING OVER THE EASTERN CAPITAL, I DID TURN SOME ROBBERS INTO REANIMATED SOLDIERS
STAGGER
BUT IT WAS ON A WHIM.
AMONG THE SURVIVORS OF THE EASTERN CAPITAL WERE PEOPLE WHO CLAIMED TO BE SAVED BY YOU.
IS IT TRUE?
...LET ME CONFIRM ONE LAST THING.
DON'T WORRY.
IT'S TRUE, BUT IT'S NOT AS THOUGH THERE WAS A SHRED OF CONSCIENCE LEFT INSIDE ME.
I'M RELIEVED.
SPIRIT CIRCLE.
EXPAND.
WHOOOOOSH

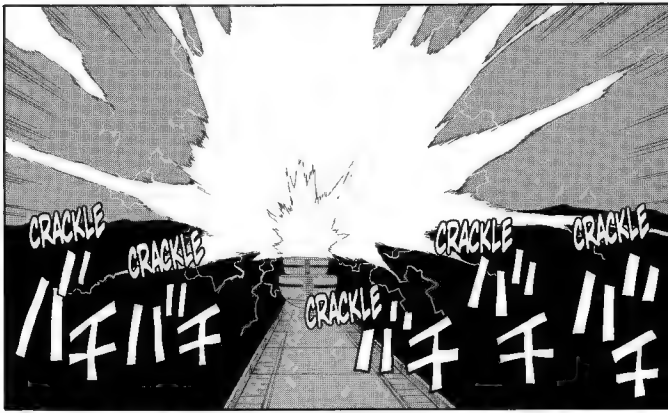
FWOOM
?!


FWOOM

FWOOM

FWOOM
FWOOM
WHAT?!
CIRCLE, SWALLOW THIS PLANET AND FEED OFF OF IT!!
TOTAL SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION!!


バチバチ
CRACKLE CRACKLE CRACKLE CRACKLE


CRACKLE
CRACKLE
バチバチ
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CRACKLE
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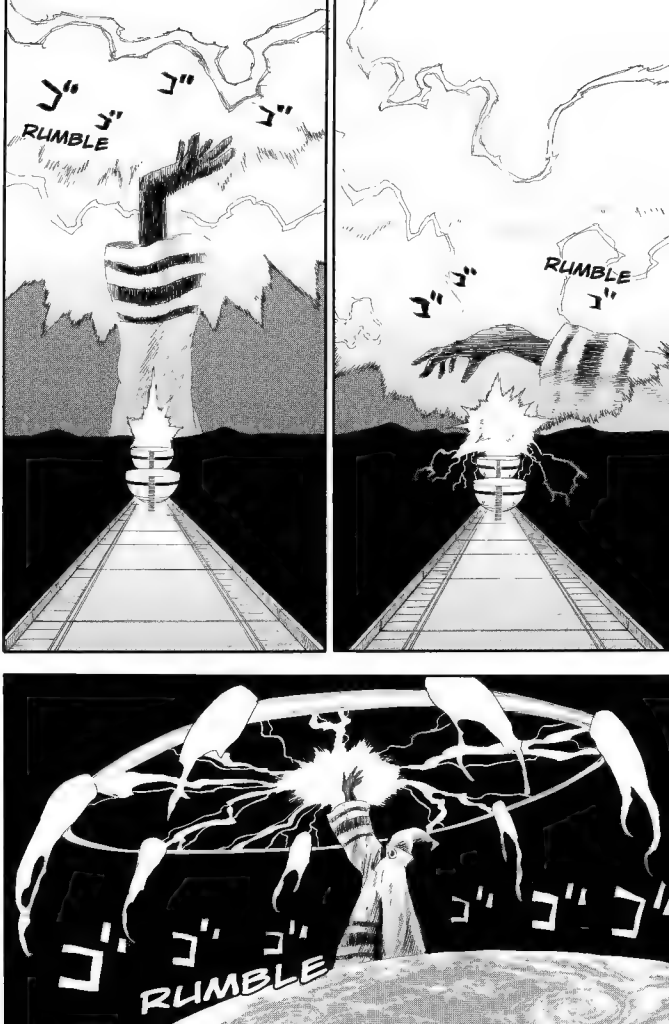
バチ

CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE

AAAAHH
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
I...
WON'T...
LET... YOU...
CRACKLE
CRACKLE


ゴ
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RUMBLE
RUMBLE
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RUMBLE

Fsss
UGH
WHAT?
...!!
WHAT JUST HAPPENED...?!
YAH...
YAAAH!!
YEAAAH!!
...THIS PRES-ENCE...
THE PLANET'S SPIRIT INTER-FERED..
IT WAS FORCED IT BACK..?!
IT.

CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
KLANG

CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE

FORTUNAAA!!
KOKOOO!!

PEOPLE WHOSE FAMILY... LOVERS... FRIENDS...
KLANG
...I'VE MET... ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE...!!
KLANG
SINCE THEY STARTED CALLING ME THE HERO WHO LIBERATED THE EASTERN CAPITAL...
...HAD BEEN TURNED INTO REANIMATED SOLDIERS...
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
KLANG

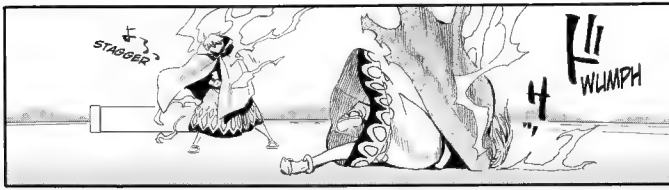
AND THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF THEM... THOU-SANDS...
...I SAW MYSELF AND EAST...!!
WHEN I SAW THE REANIMATED SOLDIER OF A PARENT LEADING A CHILD BY THE HAND...

ONLY YOU!!
!!
IT WAS THEIR HAPPINESS AND THEIR COUNTLESS SMILES...!!
THAT'S WHY YOU!!
YOU DIDN'T JUST TRAMPLE...
...ALL OVER THEIR LIVES...!!

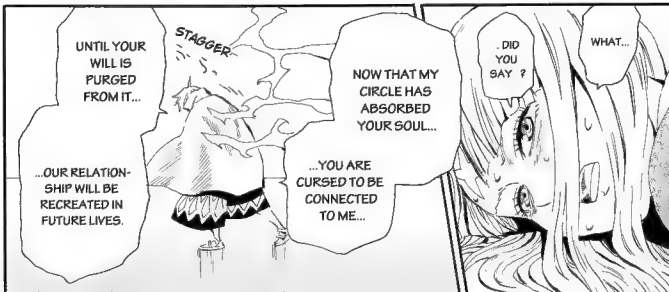
WE...

WE HIT EACH OTHER...

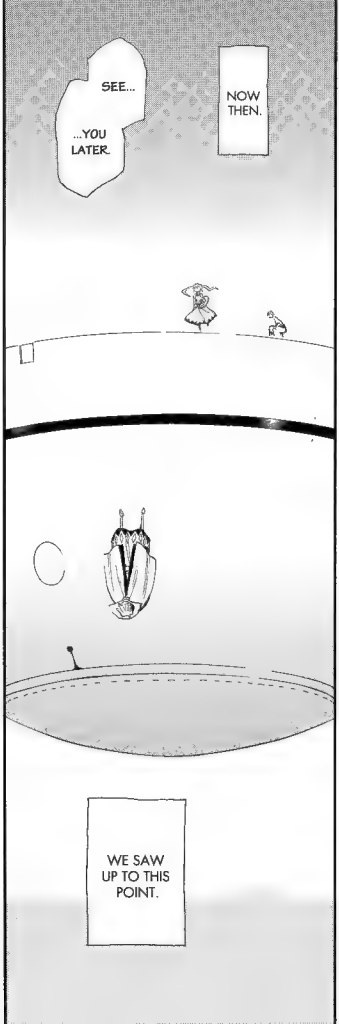
CLATTER
CLATTER
CLATTER


STAGGER
WUMPH

BESIDES, WE'LL MEET AGAIN
YOU'LL HAVE TO BE SATISFIED WITH THIS THIS TIME...
IT'S ENOUGH TO KILL ME...
IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO... DESTROY YOUR SOUL...
ALL I CUT... WAS YOUR SPIRIT BODY...
DAMN... TOO SHAL-LOW...

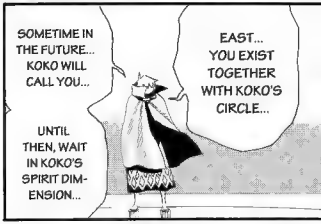

UNTIL YOUR WILL IS PURGED FROM IT...
...OUR RELATION-SHIP WILL BE RECREATED IN FUTURE LIVES.
STAGGER
NOW THAT MY CIRCLE HAS ABSORBED YOUR SOUL...
...YOU ARE CURSED TO BE CONNECTED TO ME...
. DID YOU SAY ?
WHAT...

I'LL BE GOING SOON, THOUGH...
SHE WENT FIRST...
...
CURSED
YOU CAN MANIFEST...
...IN ANY ERA OR CIVILIZATION..
...UNTIL I CALL YOU.
RUNE... TAKE THE CIRCLE AND WAIT IN MY SPIRIT DIMENSION...
MASTER!!
KOKO!!
WHOOOOOSH
MAST
FORTUNA...!!


SEE...
...YOU LATER.
NOW THEN.
WE SAW UP TO THIS POINT.

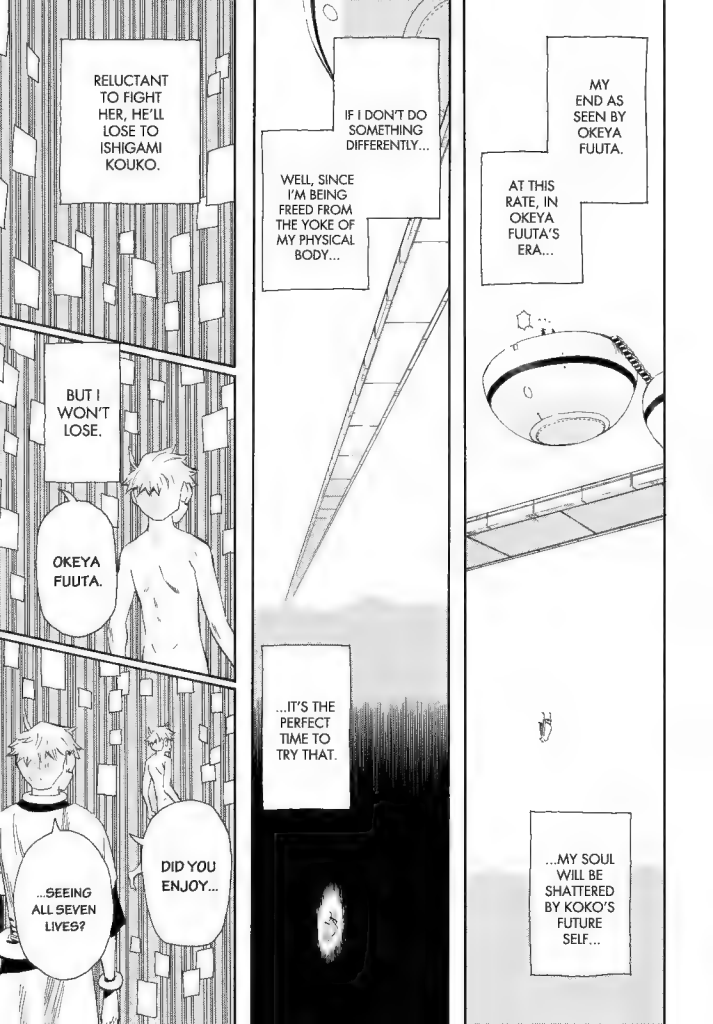
I HAVEN'T DAMAGED KOKO'S SOUL...
DON'T WORRY, EAST...

FOR-TUNA...

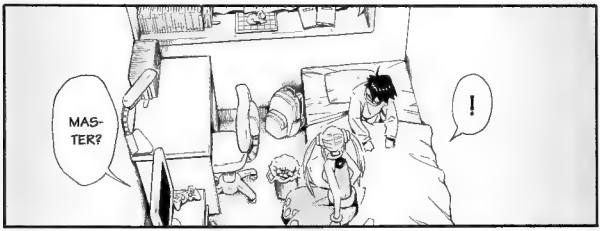

SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE... KOKO WILL CALL YOU...
UNTIL THEN, WAIT IN KOKO'S SPIRIT DIM-ENSION...
EAST... YOU EXIST TOGETHER WITH KOKO'S CIRCLE...

MAS-TER...
RUNE. THE NEXT TIME WILL BE A LONG TIME FROM NOW, BUT YOU MUST ENDURE...

I HOPE YOU'LL HAVE BETTER EXPRESSIONS THE NEXT TIME WE MEET...
WE'LL MEET AGAIN...
DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT, YOU TWO...


RELUCTANT TO FIGHT HER, HE'LL LOSE TO ISHIGAMI KOUKO.
BUT I WON'T LOSE.
OKEYA FUUTA.
...SEEING ALL SEVEN LIVES?
DID YOU ENJOY...
WELL, SINCE I'M BEING FREED FROM THE YOKE OF MY PHYSICAL BODY...
IF I DON'T DO SOMETHING DIFFERENTLY...
...IT'S THE PERFECT TIME TO TRY THAT.
AT THIS RATE, IN OKEYA FUUTA'S ERA...
MY END AS SEEN BY OKEYA FUUTA.
...MY SOUL WILL BE SHATTERED BY KOKO'S FUTURE SELF...

IT'S MY TURN.


MAS-TER?
!

GOOD MORN-ING...
...RUNE.
YES.

WHAT IS THIS?

...

WHAT'S WRONG, RUNE?
GOOD... MORN-ING...
WHAT IS THIS? WHO'S SPEAKING WITH MY VOICE?

HUH?
THAT'S MY VOICE.

!! MAS-TER?
RUNE...
YES. GOOD MORNING, RUNE.

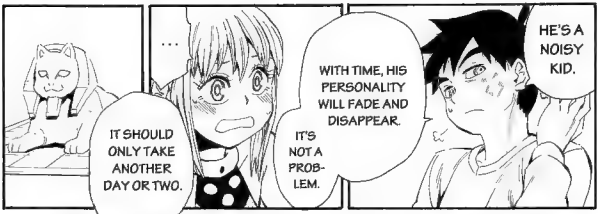
IT'S ME, FORTUNA.
CIRCLE 41 I AM HERE !
I SUCCESSFULLY HIJACKED OKEYA FUUTA'S BODY.
YOU SHOULD BE HAPPIER TO SEE ME AGAIN, RUNE.

WHAAAT?!
M-MASTER!! DID YOU ACTUALLY... DO...

THE IDEA CAME TO ME ON THE BRINK OF DEATH, BUT IT WORKED OUT FINE.
I SUSPECTED I COULD TAKE OKEYA FUUTA'S PLACE ONCE HIS PERSONALITY HAD BEEN AFFECTED BY SEEING MY LIFE.
IT SEEMS TO HAVE GONE WELL.
WHERE ON EARTH IS HE?
UM... WHERE IS MY MASTER ...?
WELL DONE, ME.
YOU MEAN OKEYA FUUTA.
...
I'M RIGHT HERE.

FORTUNA, YOU BASTARD!! STOP USING MY BODY!!
RUNE!! I'M RIGHT HERE!!

OKEYA FUUTA IS SCREAMING INSIDE MY HEAD.
AND WHAT'S THIS ABOUT HIJACKING MY BODY?! IS THIS SOME KIND OF COMIC?! GIVE ME BACK MY BODY!! RESTORE ME TO NORMAL!!


HE'S A NOISY KID.
WITH TIME, HIS PERSONALITY WILL FADE AND DISAPPEAR.
IT'S NOT A PROB-LEM.
...
IT SHOULD ONLY TAKE ANOTHER DAY OR TWO.

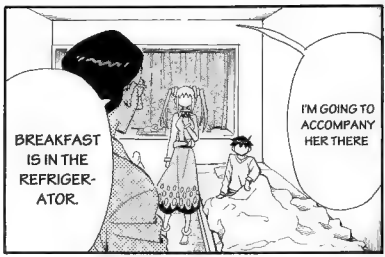
...!!

DON'T! YOU'LL SUFFER AS WELL.
TCH! IF THAT'S HOW IT'S GOING TO BE, THEN UNTIL I DISAPPEAR, I'M GOING TO SING IDOL GROUP TKB108'S SONGS ON AN END-LESS LOOP!!

WHAT?
...IS GOING TO BE STAY-ING AT THE HOSPITAL FOR A WHILE.
YOUR MOTHER...

FUUTA, DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?
KA-CHAK

THUD
THUD
STOMP STOMP STOMP
KNOCK KNOCK


BREAKFAST IS IN THE REFRIGER-ATOR.
I'M GOING TO ACCOMPANY HER THERE

WHAT?!

SEE YOU LATER.
OKAY.
SEE YOU LATER, FUUTA...
I'LL BE GONE FOR A WHILE, BUT MAKE SURE YOU KEEP GOING TO SCHOOL...
SLAM

WHAT A NOISY KID.
MOM HAD HER HAND ON HER STOMACH!! I-IS IT GOING TO BE BORN SOON?! IS THE BABY INSIDE HER OKAY?!
FORTUNA!! GO AFTER THEM AND ASK THEM FOR MORE INFOR-MATION!!

SIGH... I'LL TELL YOU, THEN.
...BUT A HUMAN BEING IS ABOUT TO BE BORN!! I'LL HAVE ANOTHER FAMILY MEMBER!!
IT IS RELEVANT!! I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S MY LITTLE BROTHER OR SISTER SINCE DAD WOULDN'T TELL ME...
THAT'S IRRELE-VANT.

IT'S STILL-BORN.
HOW... HOW DO YOU KNOW...
...THAT?
BECAUSE I LOOKED INTO OUR FUTURE.
YOU SAW IT AS WELL THROUGH ME.
KA-CHAK
COME TO THINK OF IT... I DID... BUT IT'S HAZY...
THEN YOU SHOULD CONSIDER YOURSELF FORTUN-ATE.
OTHERWISE THERE WOULD BE TWO COMPETING PER-SPECTIVES IN THE SAME CIRCLE...
...AND YOU'D BE LOOPING THROUGH AN ENDLESS HELL FOREVER.
STILL-BORN...
NO...

SHE'LL DIE.
WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO MOM?
...INFORMING YOU THAT AFTER A DIFFICULT LABOR, BOTH MOTHER AND CHILD DIED.
TOMORROW NIGHT, YOU'LL FACE OFF AGAINST ISHIGAMI KOUKO.
DURING THE FIGHT, YOU'LL GET A CALL FROM YOUR FATHER...
YOU'LL BE DEFEATED BY ISHIGAMI KOUKO. . ...AND DIE.
BUT WITH THE CALL, YOU'LL LOSE YOUR WILL TO FIGHT COMPLETELY.
YOU'RE ALREADY UNMOTIVATED TO FIGHT.
?
YOU JUST WATCH, THOUGH.

...ISHIGAMI KOUKO IS STILL AN INEXPERIENCED CHILD.
THERE'S NO WAY SHE'D STAND A CHANCE AGAINST MY FULL STRENGTH.
UNLIKE THE WARRIOR KOKO, WHO FOUGHT THROUGH BATTLES AGAINST REANIMATED SOLDIERS...
IF I FIGHT...
...YOU WON'T LOSE TO ISHIGAMI KOUKO.

MOM IS...!!
THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT!!

OF COURSE, BY THEN YOUR PERSONALITY WILL HAVE ALREADY DISAPPEARED.
カチャ
CLINK
BUT IF YOU LOSE THE FIGHT, YOU WON'T EVEN BE ABLE TO SEE YOUR MOTHER'S BODY.

...
WHAT ABOUT ISHIGAMI-SAN...?
ARE YOU GOING TO KILL HER?
ONCE I DO, I'LL TRANSFORM EARTH'S SPIRIT MATTER USING DOUBLE THE POWER OF TWO CIRCLES.
EVEN IF THE PLANET'S SPIRIT INTERFERES, I'LL FORCE HIM THROUGH.
YEAH.
I'D LIKE TO RECOVER THE SPIRIT CIRCLE SHE HAS.

THIS TIME I WILL BECOME THE UNIVERSE.

THE "TERRIFYING THING FORTUNA IS PLANNING."
SO THIS IS WHAT RUNE WARNED ME ABOUT.
...SO HE COULD CONSUME THE UNIVERSE AGAIN.
HE TOOK OVER MY BODY...
...UNTIL I FINISHED WATCHING THAT PAST LIFE.
. HE'S BEEN WAITING IN THAT SPACE WITHOUT REINCARNATING .
SINCE THE MOMENT HE DIED...
AND ME, TOO...
ISHIGAMI-SAN...
MOM...
THE BABY...

WE'LL ALL BE LOST TOMORROW...
WE'LL DISAPPEAR.
THIS IS FORTUNA'S... MY FATE...

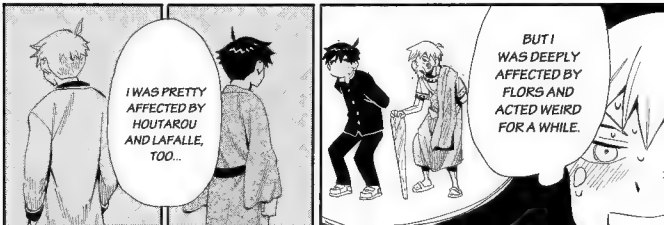
AS I FIGURED, ISHIGAMI KOUKO ISN'T COMING TO SCHOOL ANYMORE.
KILLING A PERSON IS A BIG DEAL IN THIS ERA. SHE MUST BE OFF SHARPENING HER FANGS SOMEWHERE.
MUST BE HARD FOR HER.
FUUTA.
CLATTER

GOOD MORNING.
GOOD MORNING, UH... NONO.
SHE'S THE GIRL WHO'S IN LOVE WITH OKEYA FUUTA... THOUGH I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT THIS IDIOT...
I CAN HEAR WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, DAMN IT!!

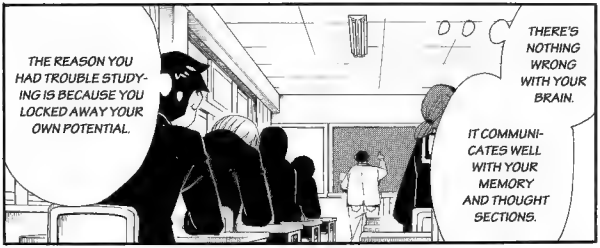
FUUTA, DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING?
NO, I DON'T KNOW...
KOKO-CHAN HASN'T COME TODAY, EITHER...

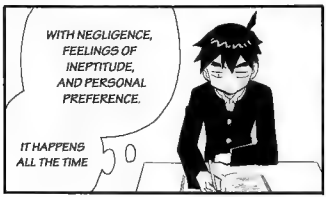
THAT'S IT, NONO!! THAT'S NOT ME!!
NAH, I FORGOT.
YOU'RE NOT HIDING THE MARK ON YOUR CHEEK TODAY?
FUUTA, YOU SEEM DIFFERENT AGAIN.

LIKE AN IMAGE CHANGE
AAAUGH! THAT'S WHAT THEY THOUGHT IT WAS?!
HOW EMBARRASSING!
CHARACTER CHANGES?
IT'S LIKE A PERSONALITY MAKEOVER.
HEY. FUUTA'S BEEN TRYING ALL KINDS OF CHARACTER CHANGES LATELY.


I WAS PRETTY AFFECTED BY HOUTAROU AND LAFALLE, TOO...
BUT I WAS DEEPLY AFFECTED BY FLORS AND ACTED WEIRD FOR A WHILE.

AND ISN'T THAT NORMALLY THE KIND OF THING YOU DO AFTER SUMMER VACATION?
GOOD MORNING. WHAT, DID YOU CHANGE CHARACTERS AGAIN, FUUTA? YOU REALLY SHOULD STOP, SINCE IT DOESN'T SUIT YOU.
EVEN UMI...
...HE'S RIGHT.
AM I REALLY JUST GOING TO DISAPPEAR...?
WELL, IT'S NOT AS THOUGH ANYTHING WILL HAPPEN EVEN IF THEY DO FIND OUT I'VE HIJACKED HIS BODY...
MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE ACTED LIKE AN IDIOT...
I SAID I CAN HEAR YOU.
WHO CARES?
LET'S NOT TALK ABOUT ME.
IF YOU'RE USING MY BRAIN, HOW COME YOU UNDERSTAND THINGS I DON'T UNDERSTAND?
HMPH... SO THIS IS WHAT THEY'VE BEEN TEACHING HIM...


THE REASON YOU HAD TROUBLE STUDYING IS BECAUSE YOU LOCKED AWAY YOUR OWN POTENTIAL.
THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH YOUR BRAIN.
IT COMMUNICATES WELL WITH YOUR MEMORY AND THOUGHT SECTIONS.


WITH NEGLIGENCE, FEELINGS OF INEPTITUDE, AND PERSONAL PREFERENCE.
IT HAPPENS ALL THE TIME

LOCKED IT AWAY?

IT'S LUDICROUS.
ORDINARY PEOPLE...
...CHOOSE TO CONTINUE BEING ORDINARY PEOPLE.

...YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN HAPPY.
IF YOU'D BEEN A LITTLE MORE ORDINARY...

THAT'S NOT WHAT I LIVE FOR!!
SKRUT
ガリ…

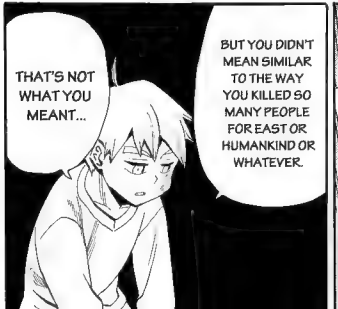
I WAS UP LATE LAST NIGHT.
SORRY, I WAS HALF-ASLEEP.

...OKEYA-KUN?

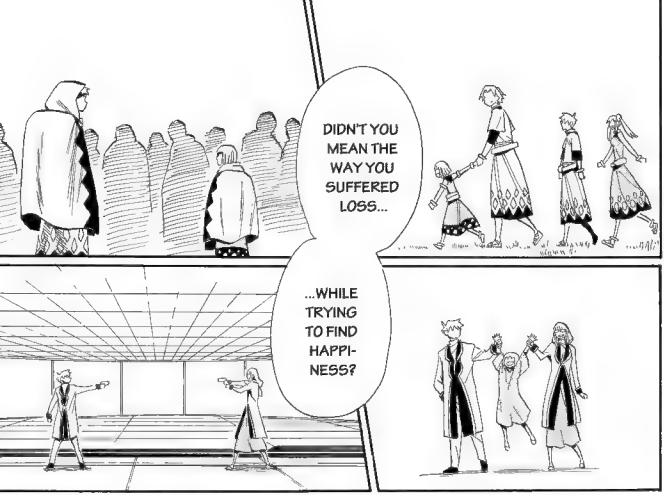
I WAS JUST... LONELY.
I UNDERSTAND BECAUSE I'M YOU. YOU... NO, I...

SHUT UP!!

...


THAT'S NOT WHAT YOU MEANT...
BUT YOU DIDN'T MEAN SIMILAR TO THE WAY YOU KILLED SO MANY PEOPLE FOR EAST OR HUMANKIND OR WHATEVER.

YOU SAID LAFALLE'S LIFE WAS "SIMILAR" TO YOURS.

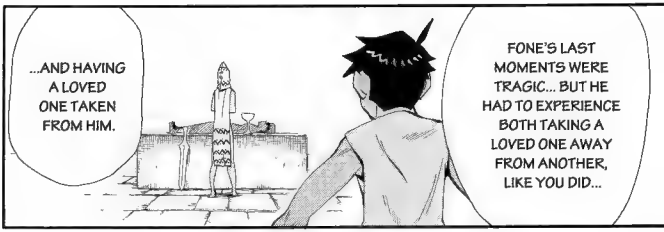

DIDN'T YOU MEAN THE WAY YOU SUFFERED LOSS...
...WHILE TRYING TO FIND HAPPI-NESS?

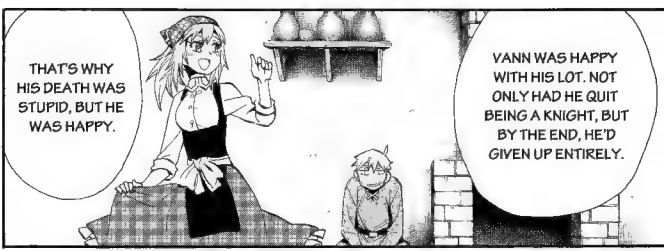
I'M LEAVING EARLY.
OKEYA-KUN, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

SKRUT

FORTUNA, NO MATTER WHERE YOU RUN...
...I'LL KEEP TALKING.

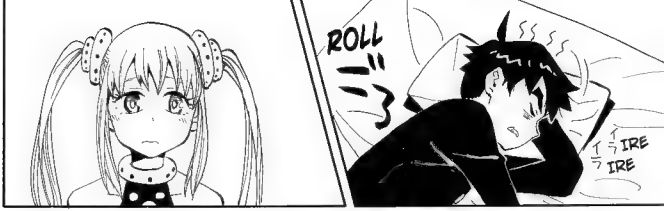
TCH!


...AND HAVING A LOVED ONE TAKEN FROM HIM.
FONE'S LAST MOMENTS WERE TRAGIC... BUT HE HAD TO EXPERIENCE BOTH TAKING A LOVED ONE AWAY FROM ANOTHER, LIKE YOU DID...


THAT'S WHY HIS DEATH WAS STUPID, BUT HE WAS HAPPY.
VANN WAS HAPPY WITH HIS LOT. NOT ONLY HAD HE QUIT BEING A KNIGHT, BUT BY THE END, HE'D GIVEN UP ENTIRELY.

BUT IN THE END, HE REALIZED THAT HE SHOULD HAVE PAID MORE ATTENTION TO THOSE CLOSE TO HIM.
FLORS COULDN'T GIVE UP, SO HE LOST EVERYTHING.

HE FOUND SATISFACTION IN WORKING HARD TO SUPPORT HIS YOUNGER SISTER. HE EVEN WANTED TO LIVE FOR ANOTHER AGAIN.
HOUTAROU ENJOYED HIS JOB OF SHARPENING SWORDS. HE WAS UNTROUBLED BY OBSESSION.
HE THOUGHT THAT THIS TIME, HE'D LIVE FOR SOMEONE, FOR HUMANITY... AND FOUND HIMSELF IN OPPOSITION WITH LAPIS AGAIN.
LAFALLE TRIED TO LIVE FOR HIS DAUGHTER, BUT HE BECAME TOO OBSESSED.
SHE WAS TROUBLED BY HOW TO LIVE WITH WHAT SHE LOVED. THAT'S WHY SHE DECIDED TO BECOME SOMEONE WHO WASN'T ACADEMICALLY GIFTED NEXT.
FUUKO WAS OBSESSED WITH HER JOB AS A GEOLOGIST, BUT SHE ENJOYED IT. SHE WASN'T UNHAPPY, BUT SHE DID SUFFER SOME.


ROLL
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I STRUGGLE WITH MY STUDIES, AND I'M NOT GREAT AT SPORTS.
BUT I HAVE MY FRIENDS, AND I'M HAPPY FOR NOW. THAT'S MY WAY OF LIFE.

AND WHEN I DIE, I'LL PROBABLY...
...REALIZE SOMETHING AGAIN.

EVERY-THING IS A PART OF AN IMPORTANT JOURNEY.
IT'S ALL PART OF MY LIFE.

I'M AN ORDINARY PERSON...
...BUT EVEN THE LIFE OF AN ORDINARY PERSON HAS GREAT MEANING FOR THE SOUL.

GO ON A JOURNEY.
ONE THAT WILL LEAD TO ME.
GIVE ME BACK MY BODY.
YOUR LIFE HAS ENDED.

SMASH

LURCH

GRAB

IF I DON'T FIGHT, ISHIGAMI KOUKO WILL SHATTER YOUR SOUL, AND BOTH YOU AND I WILL DISAPPEAR!!
JUST SHUT UP!!
STOP ACTING LIKE YOU UNDER-STAND, OKEYA FUUTA!!

SNIFFLE
RUNE!!
I'M YOUR MASTER!!
THIS IS MY MASTER'S PRECIOUS...
FORTUNA-SAMA...
WHAT'S WRONG, FORTUNA?
...!!
YOU SEEM FAR MORE HUMAN NOW THAN YOU DID WHEN YOU WERE ALIVE.

KA-CHAK
ガチャ
IT'S ABOUT TODAY.
FUUTA, DO YOU HAVE A SECOND?

OKAY, I'M OFF.
SEE YOU LATER.
I'M GOING TO VISIT MOM IN THE HOSPITAL RIGHT AFTER WORK.
I'M GIVING YOU THIS PHONE JUST IN CASE.

I HAVE SCHOOL.
YOU'RE NOT PUTTING ON MY UNIFORM?
I CHECKED OUT THE SCHOOL YESTERDAY--THAT WAS SUFFICIENT.
THEN GO TO THE HOSPITAL AND SEE HOW MOM'S DOING.
THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO TRY.
...SOMETHING YOU WANT TO TRY?
WHY WOULD I DO THAT?
YOU'VE GOT NOTHING ELSE TO DO UNTIL TONIGHT'S FIGHT.

THE INTERNET.
Geegle
CIRCLE-42
I AM HERE-2
THE INTERNET?! I AND YOU'RE HUNT-AND-PECKING!!

YEAH, BUT STILL...
WHO CARES HOW I TYPE?

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO, ANYWAY?
I'M LOSING BRAIN CELLS JUST LOOKING AT IT.
WHAT A CHAOTIC MESS OF INFOR-MATION.

...
CLICK
CLICK

YOU'RE SO STUDIOUS...

FOR ME, THIS IS AN ANCIENT CIVILIZATION. I'M CURIOUS.
I'M RE-SEARCHING HISTORY.

ITS SPACE-TIME COORDINATES ARE HIGHER THAN THIS AGE'S. IT'S IN THE FUTURE...
...IT'S NOT SURPRISING THAT THERE'S NO INFORMATION ON LAFALLE'S AGE.

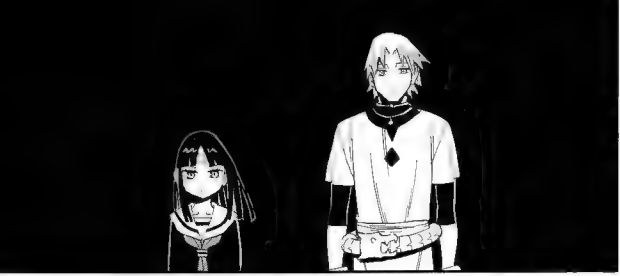
CLICK CLICK
TIME IS LIKE A RIVER.
I DON'T GET HOW MY PAST LIVES CAN BE IN THE FUTURE AND YOUR FUTURE LIVES CAN BE IN THE PAST.
AND YOUR AGE IS EVEN FURTHER IN THE FUTURE THAN LAFALLE'S...
ONCE YOU UNDERSTAND THAT, YOU'LL REALIZE IT'S POINTLESS TO WORRY ABOUT THE NUMBER OF SOULS IN A SINGLE AGE.
EVERYTHING EXISTS SIMULTANEOUSLY
WHEN WE DIE, OUR SOULS EXIT THE RIVER THAT IS THE PHYSICAL WORLD.
WE CAN WALK UP OR DOWNSTREAM.
BECAUSE THEIR SOULS ARE TRAPPED IN HALF-DEAD BODIES...
...THEY'RE UNABLE TO REINCARNATE, AND HUMANITY WILL GO EXTINCT?
THIS IS THE CENTER OF EXTINCTION...
THEN LAFALLE...
I THE NUMBER OF SOULS IS POINTLESS...?

WHAT A USELESS ASSUMP-TION.
Google
HA.
...
THE BIRTHRATE DECREASED SIMPLY BECAUSE SOULS DIDN'T FAVOR THAT ERA.
CHANGES IN POPULATION AREN'T THAT UNUSUAL.
REINCAR-NATION IS A MAGNIFICENT PROCESS.
PLANTS AND ANIMALS CAN BE REINCARNATED AS OTHER SPECIES SUCH AS HUMANS...
...AND THE SAME PERSON CAN EVEN EXIST IN THE SAME AGE.

YOUR... MY LIFE...
...WASN'T POINTLESS, LAFALLE!!
BUT THE ACT OF FREEING THE TRAPPED SOULS...
...WASN'T POINTLESS.
SKRUT
YOU'RE RIGHT. IT WASN'T POINTLESS.
LAFALLE, OKEYA FUUTA...
HMPH. THAT'S ALL?
WHAT A BORING HISTORY.

TONIGHT I WILL DEFEAT ISHIGAMI KOUKO...
...AND JOIN OUR TWO SOULS.
IT ALL LEADS TO THIS.
THEN I WILL BECOME THE UNIVERSE.
I WILL EVEN REBUILD THE ALL THE PASTS...
...THAT YOU ENJOYED.

LET'S GO, RUNE.
IT'S TIME FOR OUR REUNION.



...!! OKEYA-KUN...?
WERE YOU AFFECTED BY SEEING FORTUNA'S PAST LIFE...?
IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
KOKO... RATHER, ISHIGAMI KOUKO.

I AM FORTUNA.
NO, I HIJACKED HIS BODY.

FOR-TUNA ...!!
HOW COULD YOU...?
!!
...

HE'S INSIDE MY HEAD, BUT HE'LL DISAPPEAR SOON ENOUGH.
HE'S BEEN GETTING PRETTY QUIET.
WHAT HAPPENED TO OKEYA-KUN'S PERSONALITY?
YESTERDAY HE EVEN TRIED TO LECTURE ME.
HA, HA.
HE HAD A LOT MORE ENERGY UNTIL THIS MORNING.
HE'S JUST ACTING TOUGH.
IF YOU WANT, I CAN LECTURE YOU AGAIN.
...I'M STILL HERE.
BUT...
...THERE'S NO NEED TO RESTORE HIM.
...I SEE.

KILLING YOU WILL BE EASIER THAN KILLING OKEYA-KUN.
AFTER ALL, I'M GOING TO KILL YOU HERE.
HOW CONVEN-IENT.
...YOU EVIL SPIRIT.
ENOUGH BANTER...
YOU'RE SOMETHING SIMILAR AS WELL.
YOU'RE NO FUN. CONSIDERING OUR RELATION-SHIP...
...DON'T YOU HAVE ANYTHING ELSE TO SAY TO ME?

ARE YOU SURE YOUR PERSON-ALITY...
...HASN'T MIXED WITH KOKO'S AND BECOME MUDDLED?
...SHUT UP.
I'M ME.
FOR-TUNA.
EAST.
TELL ME. WHY...
WHY ARE YOU FIGHTING NOW? ... WHY?

...FOR-TUNA.
IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE LONELY...
...DOES IT MATTER?
YOU'RE TRAPPED AS WELL, FORTUNA.
YOUR HAPPINESS EXISTS ONLY IN THE PAST.
WHAT I DESIRE LIES AHEAD OF ME!!
SHUT UP, OKEYA FUUTA!!
I'LL CON-SUME THE UNIVERSE !!
AND I'LL BECOME THE NEW UNIVERSE!!
I'LL CRAM THE PLANET'S SPIRIT INSIDE THEM...
...AND CONSUME THE EARTH!!
I'LL BEAT ISHIGAMI KOKO!!
I'LL ACQUIRE TWO CIRCLES!!

YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO RECAPTURE THE PAST BY RECREATING IT.
...WHAT WILL YOU DO ONCE YOU'VE BECOME THAT?
COME, ISHIGAMI KOUKO!!
FWOOM
SHUT UP!! WHAT DO YOU KNOW?!
JUST LIKE YOU WANTED, LET'S SETTLE THIS!!
DON'T THINK YOU CAN BEAT ME...
...BRAT!!
INDEED!
I'LL END YOUR LIFE!!

CLANG
Ⅴ
Ⅲ
4

CLANG

HUH --?!
HAAAA!!

I'M BEING OVER-POWERED ...?!
BY A CHILD ...?!
CLANG
CLANG

THERE'S NO WAY HIS BODY CAN BEAT MINE WHEN I RUN EVERY DAY!!
OUR BODIES ARE THE SAME AGE!!
OKEYA-KUN HARDLY EVER EXERCISES!!

WHA --?
LAST TIME I WAS BEATEN BECAUSE I WAS EXHAUSTED FROM FIGHTING THOUSANDS OF REANIMATED SOLDIERS...
...BUT WITHOUT THAT HANDICAP, I CAN KILL YOU... IN AN INSTANT!!
WHAAAAT?!
I SEE NOW!

SWITCH WITH ME!! I'LL KILL HER!!
BOY, YOU SUCK. PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER.
YOU SHOULD USE YOUR WEAPON WITH MORE CARE.

CAN'T THEY SORT THIS OUT AMICABLY ...?
HMMM.
IS THERE ANY WAY TO STOP THEM...?
I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT LAPIS...

CLANG
CLANG
GIVE UP!! YOU LOST...
...BECAUSE YOU UNDER-ESTIMATED THE VALUE OF THE MIND AND BODY!!
I'LL SHOW YOU THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF A GENIUS SOUL!!
YOU MATERIAL IDEOLO-GIST!!
YAAAH!!
HAAA!!
CLANG

HUFF
HUFF
YOU'RE...
...TOUGH.
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
SHUT...
...UP.
VMM
VMM
UGH.
WHY NOW...?
...WHY DON'T YOU ANSWER IT?
I'LL WAIT.
HUFF
HUFF
...SHE'S PREPARED FOR A LONG BATTLE, HUH? THE DIFFERENCE IN OUR STAMINA PUTS ME AT A DISTINCT DISADVANTAGE...
...BUT I NEED TIME TO CATCH MY BREATH...
DAMN...
VMM
VMM
...IT'S HIS FATHER? ... OH, RIGHT.
HE'S CALLING ABOUT THE STILLBIRTH AND HIS MOTHER'S DEATH...
DAD

HE...
HELL--
THE BABY WAS BORN!!
A HEALTHY BABY WAS BORN!!
WHERE ARE YOU? COME HERE QUICKLY!!
WHAT?
I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING BECAUSE I WANTED TO SURPRISE YOU...
...BUT IT'S TWINS!!
...?!
BORN... WHAT? TWINS... HUH? WHAAAT?!
DAD
IN CALL